

The Voices Of Vanity Fair

Galatians 1:6-9 KJV I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: [7] Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. [8] But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. [9] As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Galatians 3:1-3 KJV O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? [2] This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? [3] Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Galatians 4:9 KJV But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Galatians 5:7-8 KJV Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? [8] This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

I. INTRODUCTION—VANITY FAIR

From that old classic *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, there is a scene that serves well as a leaping off point for this message. Christian and Faithful are on their way to the Celestial City and having come out of the wilderness find a city set up directly beside the road they are traveling. Bunyan is playing off of the pattern of the Lord coming out of the wilderness and then having to face the temptation of the devil. Christian and Faithful (and you and I) are no different in that we will have to face temptations along the way in our spiritual walk with the Lord.

Vanity is the city and Vanity Fair is the place of commerce in this vile place. It is created by the construction of the devil as he attempts to get every saint along the way to trade spiritual things for the superficial. Vanity has been around for a long time, in fact its origin is from Babylon. It is populated with cheats, fools, knaves, rogues, and apes who spend their time fooling about with games, thieving, murders, adulteries, and false

swearers. These types are the salesmen of the things that are being sold. In reality the merchandise there are nothing more than idols of distraction for the travelers.

It is a carnival that lasts year round and its devious salesmen are masters at their trade. According to Bunyan, they are selling merchandise to entrap even the heartiest of souls. The wares they offer are houses, land, trades, honors, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and sinful delights of all kinds. In addition to that other things for sale are husbands, wives, children, masters, servants, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, and even a mix of precious stones. There is something for every man because the trade of Vanity Fair is a serious affair. In fact it is as serious as heaven and hell and the currency of trade there is not money but rather the souls of men. The whole goal of Vanity Fair is to get men to turn away from the path of salvation and throw away their hope.

Immediately striking about this place is the voices that call out and attempt to get Christian and Faithful to turn from the path and sell out their soul. However, it was not very long before the hawkers of Vanity Fair realized that these two men were not going to be dissuaded. "Sir's, if you

aren't interested in buying what we have, what do you want to buy?" Christian speaks quickly and surely, "We buy Truth." That is the only real commodity in the realm of the Kingdom of God.

When the citizens of Vanity heard this they immediately began to persecute them for three reasons. First, for the way they dressed. They were dressed simply and modestly compared to the citizens of Vanity who were dressed provocatively and immodestly. In fact their clothing was in such contrast that the citizens of Vanity called them fools. Secondly they were persecuted for the way they talked. Their speech was clean and godly compared to the coarse, vile words that poured out of the heart of Vanity's barbarians. Thirdly, Christian and Faithful did not even want to look at the merchandise that was for sale in Vanity.

There is much more to the scene at Vanity Fair but I will let you read the outcome and find out some of the unsavory characters there. Men like Judge Lord Hategood, Lord Carnal Delight, Mr. Blindman, Mr. Live-Loose, and many others. It's worth your time!

II. GALATIANS—A PLACE WHERE VANITY FAIR THRIVED

-Long before Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians addressing some of the voices of Vanity Fair.

Galatians 1:6-7 KJV I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: [7] Which is not another; but there be some that **trouble** you, and would **pervert** the gospel of Christ.

-Paul was alarmed that there were those who would trouble you. The Greek word (tarasso) indicates that this is a working to create unrest in the soul, a hellish agitation, even to perplex the soul with the suggestion of doubts or half-truths. Literally the meaning is to shake back and forth and to agitate and stir up!

-Paul clarified that those who trouble you would pervert the Gospel. They would work to twist or turn around the message of truth. Our generation is no different from the one Paul was confronting. He was preaching the thought that everything has to flow through the filter of Scripture and the Holy Ghost. Discernment must be a prevailing trait in our relationship with God.

-The reality is that Paul understood the fragile nature of faith and that listening to the wrong voices can turn us away from the faith. A certain amount of vigilance is required in our spiritual life. I ask the question, "What voices are you allowing to influence you?"

-There is a pattern in all of the Scriptures that we read in the book of Galatians. . .

- It starts with a troubling and a perversion of the Gospel (1:6-9).
- Then it progresses to a bewitching that will lead one toward disobedience (3:1-3).
- Then it moves even further in that it changes the appetite for godly things into the things of the world (4:9).
- Its deadly conclusion leads to a disabled runner who cannot complete his race (5:7-8).

III. THE VOICES OF VANITY FAIR

-So if that is the downward pattern that will ultimately cause a man to miss his eternal reward then surely there are some voices of Vanity Fair that can be identified.

A. The Voice of the Consumer

-Everything about Vanity Fair was designed with the spiritual shopper in mind. You can still have a bit of religion *and* a lot of the trinkets of Vanity. Everything about the American culture encourages us to seek after a wide variety of things.

-Whether it is bottled water (strawberry, raspberry, or lemon), to burgers (Whoppers, Big Macs, Swiss and Mushroom, or even Chicken), to computers (Dell's, Macs, or simple PC's), or to cell phones (Blackberries, I-phones, Voyagers). It becomes almost endless as the sellers attempt to coerce people to spend their money on their newest invention.

-The voices of Vanity Fair want to make the same application to a man who is serving God. The consumer has a mentality that makes him in charge instead of God being in charge. But in the process, God ends up being bought out and He disappears from the scene.

-If we are going to have the old-fashioned, authentic, and transforming power of God in our

midst, it will be because we refuse to listen to this voice that makes me, the buyer, in charge. God still has to be in charge of everything that takes place in the apostolic church.

-The reality is that the Gospel is a call to the denial of self. The Gospel is not a call to self-fulfillment but it is a call to sacrifice. I might add that there are hard demands to following this Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Luke 9:22-27 KJV Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. [23] And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. [24] For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. [25] For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? [26] For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. [27] But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

-Living for God is not about us. Being a saint of God is not about us. In fact, it's not even about our self-esteem. Being a saint of God is being sick of sin and having a sense of desperation for redemption. It is about seeing the Lord as the crucified Savior and His offer as being priceless and saving us from sin, death, and hell.

-We have no choice in the matter as to how that we come to him. Don't listen to the voices of Vanity Fair that says that you can have it your way! Everybody is not doing it their own way. . . Moral relativism is not the way!

B. The Voice of False Doctrine

Galatians 3:1-3 KJV O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

-Doctrine is not a dirty word. It is a stabilizing force in our relationship with God. False doctrine has a pervasive action to it. It works like leaven (yeast) and soon a little will spread throughout the whole batch of flour. All that has to be done is expose just a little of it to the batch and it will do its work.

-It does not matter who follows the path of false doctrine, we have to remain true to the message. It has not changed since the inception of the Church in Acts 2. It is still repentance, water baptism in Jesus Name, and receiving the Holy Ghost. It is still going to take separation from the world to get out of this place with your soul intact.

-There must be an unwavering stand on doctrine in our day because it is the only thing that is going to save us.

One preacher (whom I will leave nameless) mentioned that he preached in a church sometime back and at the conclusion of the service another minister came up to him and thanked him for the content and tone of the message. The minister wept as he said, "I used to preach like that, but then I started getting invited to a lot of big meetings." He said, "You know that if you preach a popular message that is trite and trivial, thousands of people will scream, clap, laugh, and jump for joy. It's intoxicating to know that they like you." Then the preacher said with tears streaming down his face and said, "Sir, pray for me that I will preach the truth again. I need God's help because it is so hard to preach the truth."

-A pastor is a guardian of souls, he is a preacher of the Word, and he must leave the results of the message to God. God calls ministers to be shepherds. It is not a call to luxury; it is a call to toil, to labor, to sacrifice, and to pain. The pastor who sends the sheep out to test the water is not a shepherd but rather a hireling and does not love his sheep.

-So forgive me if I seem a bit radical about the message and how crucial and important that it is. . . It only takes one generation to lose its grip on truth and the following generation never has a chance.

-If you were to walk out of this church tonight and return in 20 years or in 40 years or in 60 years, I pray that you will hear then what you are hearing right now! We cannot afford to give in to the voices of Vanity Fair that calls us to compromise the doctrine.

-It does matter what you believe!!!!

C. The Voice of Entertainment

Galatians 4:9 KJV But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

-Our culture has never been as entertained as what it is now. The mad rush for entertainment has caused us to be so progressively dumbed down that we have allowed our souls to be rocked to sleep.

-Vanity Fair was like a glittering Las Vegas, a sinful New Orleans, a so-called liberated San Francisco, and a mass of other teeming cities of the United States. All of these things cater to our eyes, it becomes “eye candy” as they say.

Jeff Arnold—I have discovered that when I have a heightened need for entertainment that I have lowered my spiritual life to a place to seek after a substitute.

-It is now literally everywhere. It used to be that when a preacher said “entertainment” that minds immediately went to the harmful effects of Hollywood but our culture has advanced to such a place until there are many avenues of entertainment that we can take.

- Eating has taken on the tone of entertainment with restaurants on every corner.

- Shopping has taken on the tone of entertainment and we spend ourselves into depression.
- Video gaming has taken on new levels and we spend hours on end “playing.”
- DVD’s now allow us to watch movies when and where we want to at the expense of our minds.
- Surfing the internet causes a loss of precious time that might be better spent stretching our souls instead of wasting it on the inane.
- The internet has opened some up to an entire world of darkness that years ago would have taken great efforts to find but now it is at our fingertips. . . in the name of entertainment.
- (I won’t leave myself out!) Books. . . books. . . and more books. . . we have never had such access to books, but if they do not add a contribution to my soul for spiritual growth. . . What good are they?

-Entertainment keeps us busy. . . “I’m busy” and yet hours are spent on Facebook, Twitter, texting, eating, playing, shopping, and just generally wasting our lives on the frivolous. There is a relentless pursuit by the voice of entertainment until there is no time left for prayer, meditation,

the Word, much less evangelism. We are being overwhelmed by the voices of Vanity Fair.

-Elijah never heard God in all the racket. . . it was in that still small quiet voice when he put the world on hold that God finally got through to him.

-God help us to shake off the entanglements of worldly pleasures and pursuits. These voices do so much to sap our spiritual passion. . .

- Christ is the Treasure. . . not this world!!!!
- The Word is the Treasure. . . not this world!!!!
- Prayer is the Treasure. . . not this world!!!!
- Doctrine is the Treasure. . . not this world!!!!
- Worship is the Treasure. . . not this world!!!!

-Pursuing anything else is the pursuit of the beggarly elements of this world. . . and they are so fading!

D. The Voice of Self-Rationalization

Galatians 5:7-8 KJV Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? [8]

This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

-There is a pattern in all of the Scriptures that we read in the book of Galatians. . .

- It starts with a troubling and a perversion of the Gospel (1:6-9).
- Then it progresses to a bewitching that will lead one toward disobedience (3:1-3).
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-The runner who does not complete the race is often listening to an inner voice within that tells him he cannot finish. There are moments that the voice of Vanity Fair is a voice that belongs to us.

-It will impress you with all of the character flaws of those around you while keeping us blind to our own.

-It works like this, "Who do they think they are trying to do what they are doing?" You see the devil wants to use every voice he can to keep us

from that righteous, godly action of self-examination.

-Self-rationalization keeps us from self-examination. Don't forget to do the hard work of self-examination!

IV. CONCLUSION—THE ONE VOICE WE MUST HEAR. . .

-There is one voice that we must hear at all costs. .
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John 10:24-31 KJV Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. [25] Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. [26] But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. [27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: [28] And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. [29] My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. [30] I and my Father are one. [31] Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

-Whatever that voice calls us to do. . . we must do it as we turn our deaf ears to the voices of Vanity Fair.