

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Bitter Controversies Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time Monday, October 6, 2014
8:15 AM **Gal 1:6-12; Lk 10:25-37** (St. Bruno, priest; Bl. Marie Rose Durocher, virgin)
(We are saved through him, through God who works in Christ. And this has to be re-discerned in every period of time.)

“I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel.”

St. Paul here is involved in a controversy, a very bitter one, in the Church at Galatia. We should realize that **from the very beginning the Church has been involved in bitter controversies.** There never was a time where everyone got along beautifully. There never was a place. I hate to be cynical, but one could say it's just not human. And the Church is very human.

Now we have to keep in mind, and this is what St. Paul is trying to get at, we are not saved by the Church. We are not saved by belonging as a member to the Church, nor is anyone saved by being a Jew, by being a member of the people of God. **Everyone who is saved is saved by God** one way or another, however that works out. And actually we don't even know. But the main thing is the focus has to be on God.

In the early Church there were those, sincere people mind you, who believed in Jesus. They said, yes, Jesus is from God and, yes, we have to incorporate Jesus' teachings into our lives, but we have to remain faithful to our covenant and to all of the customs and laws and stipulations of our covenant. **They were willing to accept gentiles into the people of God,** so to speak, **but they were not willing to eat with them, even the Eucharist.** They said, well we can't because Jews do not eat with gentiles. So unless the gentiles become Jews through circumcision, you cannot have one Eucharist. There would be two.

This was the basis of Paul's great problem with them. **They were creating two churches.** And he said that doesn't make any sense. Christ died for all. **We are all incorporated by Baptism into one body.** We have to have Eucharist together, no matter what you think the law of God says, no matter how you have always read it, no matter what tradition says. It doesn't matter. This is what must be. And he says, I didn't get this from somebody else. I got it from God himself. **So Paul's version of the gospel,** he's claiming, is not based on the authority of the apostles or anybody else, but on **God who gave it to him directly and, therefore, he makes himself equal to the twelve apostles.**

Now this is a lot to think about. In the history the Church, **Paul did not solve all the problems** involved with how do Christians relate to our tradition. Marcion, a prominent leader, **Marcion wanted to get rid of the entire Old Testament.** Let's not even talk about it at all. Let's just forget about it. Well, upon reflection, people said, well, that's not such a good idea because so often the gospels are quoting the prophets or some other part of the Old Testament. Even the gospel today really is about the Old Testament. "What do I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, What do you think the Bible says? This man quotes the Old Testament. "Love God with your whole heart, mind and soul" is the Old Testament. "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the Old Testament. So **we can't completely get rid of it, but on the other hand we can't take the whole thing either.** So this is the problem. It will always be a problem. **How much of the Old Testament do we find really the word of God in, and how much is really the word of people, of men, of the past and of distant and dead cultures? That's the problem.**

And it persists to this very day. There are people who want to find the word of God in Scripture that really tolerates all kinds of violence for one thing. Jesus didn't. Insofar as Jesus didn't, it doesn't seem that we should either because **we are saved through him, through God who works in Christ. And this has to be re-discerned in every period of time.** It's an ongoing problem; it will never go away. But, as St. Paul says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one"—Christ—"who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, not that there is another.