

The Numbers Game

Galatians 6:12-15

Intro:

- A. Paul has stated an eternal spiritual principle. **Vs. 8**
 - 1. Sowing flesh always harvests flesh.
 - 2. Sowing spirit always harvest spirit.
- B. Paul gives an example of spirit sowing. **Vs. 10**
 - 1. Do good to all.
 - 2. Do good verily to fellow church members.
- C. He warns them about a common problem. **Vs. 9**
 - 1. Do not look at the suffering that will come from doing good and refuse to do it.
 - 2. **Vs. 11** They should be like Paul and do the right thing no matter, the consequences.
- D. Paul had overcome two problems.
 - 1. Physical weariness.
 - 2. Persecution from the law-keepers, those who insisted on maintaining the rite of circumcision.
- E. Paul continues his letter by giving to them an example of sowing to the flesh. **Vs. 12,13**
 - 1. They persuaded people to be circumcised. Probably those who had been converted and then did not have the male children circumcised and Gentiles.
 - 2. They were "COUNTERS". They gloried in reporting what they had done for God and not in what God had done for them.
 - 3. This was their spirit. **Acts 21:19-21.** Paul declared what God had done, no numbers. "They" declared what they had done and gave numbers.

I. Why Play The Numbers Game?

- A. The fact of the numbers game.
 - 1. **Vs. 12** "**As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh...**"
 - 2. "Desire" = $\theta\epsilon\lambda\omega$ = "to will", "to wish".
 - 3. "Fair show" = $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\rho\omicron\sigma\omega\pi\epsilon\omega$ = "to make a fair appearance", "to please", "to look good".
 - 4. "to make a pleasing appearance in worldly fashion", "so that they can be popular". So they can look good, not you!
- B. The method of these number counters.
 - 1. "**they constrain you to be circumcised...**"

2. "Constrain" = αναγκάζω = "to necessitate", "to compel", "to coerce", This is the same word that is translated "compel" in Luke 14:23, the parable of the great feast.
 3. The concept is force that cannot be resisted and it is one person's will being imposed upon another. This was religious activity not sinful things. Their coercion seemed to be compassion.
- C. The motive of the numbers game, fear.
1. **"only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ."**
 2. "Suffer persecution" = διώκω = "to cause to flee", "to pursue after", "to pursue with hatred".
 3. These people were teachers who were afraid to preach the cross only. They were intimidated by the pious Judaizers. They feared these men's faces. They preached a perverted gospel out of fear. They feared what others would say if they couldn't show numbers. They feared failure and engaged in false evangelism!

II. The Hypocrisy Of The Players.

- A. **Vs. 13a "For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law;"**
1. "Why, even the circumcision party do not observe the Law themselves!" - Mof
 2. "Why, they don not even observe the law, although they adopt circumcision;" - Knox
- B. The common experience of all is hard to refute.
1. The people who talk the loudest seldom perform according to their own standards.
 2. Those who condemn an act are often doing what they condemn.

III. The Object Of Glorifying.

- A. **Vs. 13b "...but desire to have you circumcised..."**
1. "Desire" = θελω = "to wish", "to will", "that which one wills to happen".
 2. "they are having you circumcised."
 3. Not to become alcoholics, drug addicts...
- B. **"...that they may glory in your flesh."**
1. "Glory" = καυχασμαι = "they may boast".
 2. "in order that they can boast that you are their disciples."
 3. These preachers coerced these people to be circumcised, and then gloried in them as trophies

- of their spirituality and ministerial success.
4. These are not good people whose zeal is fanned by the Holy Spirit. They are vile in motive and action. Paul said of them, "let him be accursed!" Gal. 1:8.

IV. The True Object Of Glorifying.

- A. **Vs. 14 "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."**
1. "Forbid" = μη = not + γΕΝΟΙΤΟ = "may it be".
 2. "Glory" = καυχασθαι = "to boast".
 3. "Cross" = σταυρος = "an upright pale or stake; a stake on which malefactors were nailed for execution or crucifixion".
 4. Paul knew that we should never take credit nor boast about anything that is done for God.
- B. **"...by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."**
1. "World" = κοσμος = "order", "the order of the world". Here the world system.
 2. "Crucified" = εσταυρωται = Perf., Ind., Pass., "to put to death by crucifixion". The Perf. tense indicates the continuing and lasting state or condition.
 3. "Yet God forbid that I should boast about anything or anybody, except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which means that the world is a dead thing to me and I am a dead man to the world!" - Phi
- C. **Vs. 15 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision,"**
1. "Availeth" = ισχυω = "to be mighty", "to prevail".
 2. "Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing."
- D. **"...but a new creature."**
1. "Creature" = κτισις = creation + καινη = "a new".
 2. "The only thing that counts is a new creation."

V. The Modern Day Numbers Game.

"Child Sacrifice in Fundamentalism" Target, Jan., 1994, page 8, by Dr. John Bishop, Pastor of Cleburne County Baptist Church, Heber Springs, AR.

What would you call it when you know of at least two of the top five Fundamental Churches who have the highest numbers

of baptisms reported repeatedly baptize 3 and 4 year old children, and many children 7 and 8 times just so they can be "Top Gun" in certain Fundamental circles? I know this for a fact because of their friends and staff, not their enemies. I am not talking about reports from disgruntled church members or fired staff workers. I am talking about men who work for them, or use them who have admitted both of the things I listed earlier in this paragraph concerning children. These men have spoken in defense of these two churches, which is the shocking thing and continue to use the pastors of these churches in spite of their knowledge of these actions! We are not talking about gossip or rumors, but facts.

Now why have I chosen to call the practice of baptizing 3 and 4 year olds off bus routs and baptizing some children again every time they change bus captains child sacrifice? I believe these children's minds, and in some instances their souls, are being sacrificed in order to rack up big numbers of baptisms which in turn gives them the right to be the undisputed "Champion" of our movement.

But do you know how difficult it is to try to deal with a child who has been baptized 4 times in one of these high-powered soul-winning churches? I do. They are so confused it breaks your heart to hear them say, "I have prayed the sinner's prayer and been baptized 4 times. Why don't I have assurance of salvation?? They are totally confused. They have been told, and I have heard with my own ears, "Why don't you just pray this prayer again just to make sure? Just in case you weren't sincere the other times." Now that may seem to work once or twice, which practice I question completely, but after 3 or 4 times those kids are saying, "Which one was real?"

I am not against reports on soul-winning and baptisms honestly given for the glory of God. I am against exaggerated reports and unscrupulous practices mentioned above to be on the top of somebody's list. Being on the top of that list means many things in Fundamental circles nowadays such as the following: 1. The right to be heard and admired by many. We should say that a man has a right to be heard if he is Scriptural, not "big" in numbers of people or baptisms. 2. The right to be unchallenged in your practices. Many Fundamentalists today say, "Hey you can't argue with success!" Now by success they mean numbers, and I disagree with that wholeheartedly! Numbers do not mean success especially when many of us know that those numbers were arrived at by questionable means if not down right dishonest means. Many of these high profile speakers will remind everyone or make sure that someone reminds everyone in the building that they baptized "Such and Such" number so that everyone pays attention to how they did it with great respect. This philosophy is not found in the Bible! The only authority we have for demanding the attention of another is that we have based what we say on the Bible, not because of results. I

hate to say it but I think many Fundamentalists are just as bad as the Charismatics when it comes to this point. The Charismatics declare they are right and God is blessing because of the crowds, converts and cash, and I have been to some Fundamentalist's conferences where the speaker is introduced by extolling the great growth of their church, the number of their baptisms and the size and cost of their facilities to make sure everyone know why this man is right! I say this is dangerous.

We have a dangerous atmosphere in Fundamentalism today. We have created an atmosphere that says the person with the most baptisms and largest crowds wins. We have forgotten about how pure the church is that the man pastors. Now I know immediately some people are going to say, "Bro. John is against church growth, soul-winning.

I know of one former associate of these churches who lived in immorality for a period of time before getting caught. His own testimony was that he had just as many "converts" baptized or "in the water" as many of these groups call it, during his time of living in sin as he did before! That's scary! Many pastors, because of this kind of mentality of having numbers, are under pressure because of the atmosphere we have created and are tempted to resort to unscrupulous and sometimes unscriptural means to get those numbers.

Where are some of these men that know this is going on and yet are keeping silent? They dare not say anything for fear of being put out of the "circle." We have allowed this to exist too long in Fundamentalism. I heard one of these "Big Name" (Big Numbers) preachers preach some outright heresy in a meeting, but nobody questioned he was right. After all, he has the numbers to back him up. He got by with misusing Scripture because he has the numbers.

I am certain my name will be "mud" now because I have dared to attack Fundamentalism's sacred cow of soul-winning. One man that I sought to carefully correct in a given situation attacked my character for disagreeing with his approach. He spread the word too. The, after asking me how many I had "in the water" last week and "humbly" pointing out he had more, let me know in no uncertain terms he was right and I was wrong. My greatest concern is not how many I get "in the water" but how many by the grace and help of God I can get under the blood!

