

BEWITCHED

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?” (Gal. 3:1).

The Greek word translated as “bewitched” is “baskaino”. This is the only time it is found in the N. T. Scriptures. When someone is “bewitched” they behave irrationally but are not aware of it. I have personally seen a man under the spell of a hypnotist eat a spoon full of mustard and say that it tasted like “double chocolate icing”. He ate an onion and thought it was an apple. He stood on a platform before hundreds of witnesses and thought he was fishing in a river. He was bewitched!

The Galatians were acting so irrationally that Paul concluded that they were bewitched. After being justified by faith they were now seeking to be justified by the Law. Something was wrong!

There is a sense in which all sin is irrational, yet “every way of a man is right in his own eyes” (Prov. 21:2). A person who is bewitched may think stupid actions are smart, that’s why their sins seem rational. At the time it seemed right for Cain to kill his brother. At the time it seemed right for Achan to steal those sacred things from Jericho. At the time it seemed right for David to commit adultery. At the time it seemed right for Judas to betray Jesus. For those not bewitched, however, every one of these sins is stupid and irrational.

Take another look at the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11 - 32). He was so bewitched that he even resented the love of his father. Under some spell he fled to a far country, wasted his substance in riotous living, and was eating with the pigs. Yet, in his own mind he was “right”. Under this spell he was proud to be the master of his own destiny. Like a hypnotized man eating mustard, his befuddled mind didn’t compute that he was eating pig’s food. He was so happy to be free from his father that even the pig pen may have seemed like a paradise. Then he “CAME TO HIS SENSES”. When the evil spell was broken he awakened to reality. He had made such a mess of his life that even his father’s servants were better off than he was. Even though he was still in a far country, being in his right mind gave him the wisdom and courage to go home where he belonged.

One indicator of the paradigm shift that took place in the prodigal’s mind is reflected by what he said when he left, and what he said when he came home. When he left he said “give me” my share of the estate, and when he came home he said “make me” like one of your hired servants. Our Heavenly Father doesn’t need to change, we do! We also need to pray to our Father, “make me”!

One of the most bizarre illustrations of “bewitching” with which I am personally familiar took place outside of Carl Junction, Mo. Dec. 6, 1987. On that day 19 year old Steven Newberry was bludgeoned to death by three classmates in a Satanic sacrifice. All three of the murderers were excellent students and popular. One was a personal friend and also a student in my Sunday School Class. All three were arrested the next day and are now serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. There is no rational explanation for why they did what they did. They were “bewitched”. Newspaper reports indicate that their leader said he heard a voice saying “do it now”. They did! Satan promised them power but he is a liar. Now they have no power, they are prisoners.

The word translated as “witchcraft” in Gal.5:20 is “pharmakia” from which we get our English word “pharmacy”. The use of drugs is one of the many ways Satan dulls our senses and opens our minds to his evil influence. This was the case with the young murderers mentioned above. They were not only doing drugs but also reading the Satanic Bible. The rest is history.

Someone was supposed to have asked how close you could get to a jet engine without being sucked in? Why? What possible benefit is there to being sucked into a jet engine? Jesus taught us to pray “Lead us not into temptation” (Matt. 6:13). That’s good advice! It is wise to stay as far away from temptation as possible. Since sheep have almost no way to defend themselves, they need to stay as close to the Shepherd as possible. So do we!