

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

### GALATIANS 4:12-20, *PERSONAL APPEALS*

#### A. Paul's relationship to the Galatians (12-16)

1. Paul asked the Galatians to become like him after his conversion (12a), ***Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.***
  - a. Paul appealed to them based on their personal knowledge of him through his previous visits.
    - 1) As noted earlier, *Brothers*, refers to male and female Galatian believers.
    - 2) James Montgomery Boice, *If the reader is inclined to think Paul has been impersonal in dealing with the problems at Galatia, that he has been arguing as a scholar and not as a pastor, the present passage should disabuse him of this idea.*
    - 3) Timothy George, *All true theology worthy of the name is pastoral theology.*
  - b. Paul commanded the Galatians to live like him.
    - 1) Paul was a Jew who lived free of the Law.
    - 2) He ordered (first imperative in Galatians) them to lived like Him since they were Gentiles.
    - 3) Donald Campbell clearly states Paul's meaning, *Become free from the Law as I am, for after my conversion I became like the Gentiles, no longer living under the Law.*
    - 4) John Stott, *Paul longed for them to become like him in his Christian faith and life, to be delivered from the evil influence of the false teachers, and to share his convictions about the truth as it is in Jesus, about the liberty with which Christ has made us free. He wanted them to become like himself in his Christian freedom.*
    - 5) Grant Osborne, *The startling truth about the Galatians was that many of them were reversing this pattern and abandoning Christ in favor of the obsolete Old Testament law, reverting from living faith back to lifeless works.*
  - c. Paul declared that he had become like them.
    - 1) He lived in their culture and did not attempt to change them on the outside but focused on the inside.
    - 2) Note Paul's principle in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22, *To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.*
    - 3) John Stott, *If they are to become one with us in Christian conviction and experience, we must first become one with them in Christian compassion.*
2. Paul reminded them of his positive reception by the Galatians (12b-14), ***You did me no wrong. You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.***
  - a. *You did me no wrong*
    - 1) This statement should go with verses 13 and 14.
    - 2) Paul expressed his appreciation for being graciously accepted by them on his first visit (Acts 13-14).
    - 3) They could have easily rejected him and his message based on his physical infirmity noted in verse 13.
  - b. *because of a bodily ailment*
    - 1) This was the state in which Paul preached the Gospel to the Galatians.
    - 2) Also, it implies the reason why he was in Galatia sharing the Gospel with them. It was because of his illness and the need for recuperation. He was probably headed elsewhere but made the stop in Galatia.
    - 3) It is interesting to note that despite his severe illness, his primary focus was sharing the Gospel.
  - c. Identification of Paul's illness
    - 1) It is not known for certain why Paul was so ill.
      - a) It must have been something that was repulsive since Paul considered his condition a trial to the Galatians.
      - b) Ronald Fung, . . . *physical infirmity and illness were regarded by Jews and Gentiles alike as a symbol of divine displeasure or punishment. . .*
    - 2) Many ailments have been suggested including malaria, epilepsy, an eye disorder, and sharp pains accompanied by depression.
    - 3) It may have been Paul's *thorn in the flesh*, 2 Corinthians 12:7, *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.*

- d. The reception of Paul by the Galatians
  - 1) They could have scorned or despised him but they received him and his message.
  - 2) The power of the Gospel is not bound by our human weaknesses.
  - 3) The Galatians thought they were hearing an angel since the message seemed divine.
  - 4) It appears that they even identified Paul with Christ Jesus.
    - a) John 13:20, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*
    - b) Richard Longenecker, *The exaggerated comparisons are used to praise the Galatians with regard to their earlier response to Paul and his evangelistic ministry, and not to extol Paul himself.*
  - 5) Grant Osborne, *The Galatians' welcoming attitude refers both to their friendly reception of Paul and to their openness to the Christ he was proclaiming. They recognized that God had sent Paul in spite of his compromised physical condition. The gospel he proclaimed had been so powerful and the evidence of God in him so strong that their hearts had been opened and they had been led by God to accept both Paul and his Lord and to turn to Christ in faith and to Paul in friendship.*
3. Paul asked why the Galatians changed their opinion concerning him (15-16), ***What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?***
  - a. Paul wanted to know what happened to their *blessedness*.
    - 1) The word translated *blessedness* means *a state of happiness*.
    - 2) It may be translated, *You were so happy. What has happened to you now?*
    - 3) He asked them why had they lost their happiness upon hearing and receiving the Gospel.
  - b. He declared that they would have done just about anything for Paul, even plucked out their eyes for him.
    - 1) Some say that Paul's disease must have had to do with his eyes based on their proclamation.
    - 2) Donald Campbell, *This may simply be a bold figure of speech to convey the high esteem the Galatians had had for the apostle—they would have given him their most precious possession.*
  - c. Paul asked them why they would turn against him for telling the truth.
    - 1) Grant Osborne, *Paul had been profoundly touched by their openness to him and to the gospel, and that made their current rejection all the more difficult to take.*
    - 2) The Galatians were upset with what Paul was telling them in the epistle.
      - a) The difference was not what Paul shared in his first visit and his letter but that the Galatians' perception of the truth had been distorted by the Judaizers.
      - b) Paul had proclaimed faith in Christ plus nothing but the Judaizers were drawing them to faith in Christ plus keeping the Law.
      - c) Warren Wiersbe, *They had not lost the experience of salvation—they were still Christians; but they were losing the enjoyment of their salvation and finding satisfaction in their works instead.*
- B. The false teachers' relationship to the Galatians (17-20)
  1. The Judaizers sought to control the Galatians for personal reasons (17-18), ***They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,***
    - a. The Judaizers wanted to shut out Paul so they would have control of the Galatians.
      - 1) Paul declared that the Judaizers had wrong motives, *for no good purpose*.
      - 2) They were trying to destroy the Galatians' relationship with Paul.
        - a) *to shut you out*, means *to alienate* or *lock out*.
        - b) Thomas Constable, *The Judaizers were seeking to shut the Galatians out of the sphere of Paul's influence and gospel so his readers would be dependent on them.*
        - c) The Judaizers *made much* of the Galatians so they would *make much* of the Judaizers and would turn to faith plus works.
    - b. Paul said it is good to be respected if it is for the right reasons.
      - 1) Paul's motive for seeking the Galatians was to see them grow in grace through faith in Christ alone.
      - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *The task of the spiritual leader is to get people to love and follow Christ, not to promote himself and his ministry.*

- c. *and not only when I am present with you*
- 1) It appears that Paul is chiding the Galatians for being more impressed by who is currently with them instead of what had already been taught.
  - 2) When Paul was with the Galatians they made much of him but when the Judaizers arrived, they made much of them.
  - 3) Ephesians 4:14, *so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*
2. Paul was perplexed by their change in spiritual direction (19-20), *my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*
- a. Paul's motive concerning the Galatians was like a mother for her child.
    - 1) *my little children.*
      - a) This term of endearment is used only here in Paul's epistles.
      - b) 1 Corinthians 4:15, *For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*
      - c) Philemon 10, *I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.*
    - 2) He compared himself to a mother in travail for her children.
      - a) First, it was when they had come to faith.
      - b) Now, it was for their deliverance from false teachers who were stunting their spiritual growth.
        - 1] Paul was not satisfied until the Galatian believers were spiritually mature, *until Christ is formed in you.*
        - 2] John Stott, *Paul was prepared to sacrifice himself for them, to be in travail until Christ was formed in them.*
        - 3] The Apostle John shared similar concerns in 3 John 4, *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*
  - b. Paul wished he could share in person his concern for the direction they were taking.
    - 1) He wished he could be with them and see them turn back to the truth.
      - a) Ronald Fung, *Apparently he believes that if only he could be present with them he would be able to regain their trust and allegiance, so that it would no longer be necessary to use such severe language as he has found it necessary to use in reminding them of the truth and warning them against falsehood.*
      - b) Donald Campbell, *He had a deep desire to be with them so that he could speak gently, though firmly, concerning his grave concerns.*
    - 2) His strong words were based on the fact that he was puzzled by the Galatians spiritual direction.
      - a) The Gospel of grace is so clear, so beautiful, so life giving. But now, the Galatians were turning back to that which could only bring death.
      - b) Galatians 3:1, *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.*
      - c) Charles H. Spurgeon, *All his anxiety arose from their falling into ritualism and legalism. He wanted to see them living by faith upon Jesus and worshiping God with free spiritual worship. The fashionable religion of the present day is overlaid with pompous forms, and the plain gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus is despised. Nevertheless, to the doctrine of grace let us steadfastly cleave, for it alone is truth, and in it alone is salvation.*
  3. John Stott on the difference between Paul and the Judaizers, *The false teachers were seeking themselves to dominate the Galatians; Paul longed that Christ be formed in them. They had a selfish eye to their own prestige and position; Paul was prepared to sacrifice himself for them, to be in travail until Christ was formed in them.*

## CONCLUSION

- A. Paul wondered why the Galatians would trade in their Gospel joy for the drudgery of works.
- B. The Judaizers wanted to control the Galatians with fake praise and false teaching.
- C. Paul loved the Galatians like a mother in travail for her children.
- D. Paul asked the Galatians to remember how they openly received him and the message of the Gospel.
- E. Then, he asked them to explain why they had changed their opinion of him and the Gospel.