

The Epistle to the Galatians¹

The Need for Christ to be Formed in the Heirs of Promise (Gal.4:8-20)

I The Challenge Paul Faced

Paul was in a difficult situation; though brought to the Lord by him, and thus his spiritual children, the Galatians had turned away from Paul's message to another gospel. Paul, however, had a heart to care for them by ministering Christ to them and labor that Christ might be fully formed in them. Paul's labor was not a mere work. He was burdened to see Christ formed, develop and grow to full maturity in them. He labored not for the sake of a work, but for Christ to be fully expressed in the saints.

II Enslaved and Deceived

Paul told the Galatians that formerly they had been slaves to the gods that are not gods, i.e., to idols. **(Gal.4:8)**. Though they had abandoned those gods and embraced the true God, the Galatians settled for less, i.e., they had turned to the weak and poor elements of the world, which includes law-keeping and thus had become enslaved again. **(Gal.4:9)** They had been deceived to settle for something that seemed to be spiritual (law keeping), but was, in fact, a detour from God and enslavement; they had been deceived to the uttermost.

III Religious Observances or Becoming as Paul

- A. The Galatians had been reduced to the notion that the Christian life was one of Jewish religious observances **(Gal.4:10)** They were being taught to observe days, such as Sabbaths and new moons **(Isa.66:23)**, months like Abib, Zif Ethanim and Bul **(Exo.13:4, 1Kings 6:1, 37, 8:2, 6:38)**, festal seasons such as the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles **(2Chron.8:13)** and years such as sabbatical years **(Lev.25:4)**. Paul was puzzled and could not believe that they could return to this type of practice and told them that if this was the case, then he had labored for naught. **(Gal.4:11)**
- B. Since Paul was free from religious bondage and had become as they to reach them with the gospel, he pleaded with the Galatians that they would imitate him in abandoning religious observances. **(Gal.4:12)** They had not been a cause of injury to him in the past and he expected as much now.

IV An Opportunity to Minister Christ

In his first missionary journey, Paul was detained in Galatia because of some physical weakness and used the opportunity to preach the gospel. **(Gal.4:13)** During this time, they not only received his message but cared for him during his physical ailment, approving, esteeming, and appreciating him. So Paul in this verse appeals to their love by reminding them that they had received him as a messenger of God. **(Gal.4:14)**

¹ Outline and materials based on the *Life-Study of Galatians by Witness Lee, Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, California, May, 1984*. Any inaccuracies or errors, in the outline above, are the sole responsibility of the adopter of these materials. - D.M.

V Their Blessedness and an Appeal to the Believers' Affection

Now Paul asks them, "Do you remember the sweetness, happiness and blessedness of those simple days in Christ, when first we met?" The implied question is, "Are you truly blessed or happy now that you are enslaved to the law? **(Gal.4:15)** When Paul was among them, the Galatians appreciated his preaching and loved him to such an extent, he reminds them, that they would have willingly done anything possible to restore his eyesight. Apparently, Paul's weakness had to do with his eyes. **(Gal.4:13, 6:11, 2Cor.12:7-9, cf.w/ Acts 9:3-4a, 8-9, 17-18)**. Unfortunately, some of the believers had come to regard Paul as an enemy, but he continued to appeal to them with an intimate loving heart and care. He did not merely argue doctrine with them, he reached out to them in love. **(Gal.4:16)**

VI The Aim of the Judaizers

Then he spoke to expose the Judaizers, asserting that they came zealous over or *jealously courting* the Galatians, trying to gain their allegiance and at the same time to shut them off from the grace and the proper gospel. **(Gal.4:17)**. He admitted that anyone jealously courting in a good thing (for the gospel) may do so. He would not stand in the way of that one. This shows Paul was not narrowly trying to protect his "territory." Rather, he rejoices in such ones. **(Gal.4:18, Phil.1:18)**

VII Paul's Travail to Minister Christ

Paul sees himself not only as an admonishing father but a traving mother. **(1Thes.2:11, 9a, 7, Gal.4:19)**. He actually first travailed for them when he brought them the gospel and the result was their regeneration. Now that they have been distracted from going on with Christ, so he was traving again, until Christ is formed in them. To have Christ formed in us is to have Christ grown in us in full. First, He is born into us, then He lives in us **(Gal.2:20)** and He will be formed in us at our maturity. To minister Christ to others is not easy. If we would minister Christ to people, with a sincere heart you will discover what labor and suffering it requires.

VIII Paul's Perplexity and Being Pure in Motive

Paul tried to change his tone from severity to affection in order to recover the Galatians back to Christ. But he did not feel that what he had written was adequate. Instead, he felt he needed to see them personally because his presence would accomplish more than his writing. **(Gal.4:20)** It is very difficult to appeal to others' personal affection, in a proper way, for it requires that we be pure. If we are not pure, we should be careful in our affection for the saints. It must not come out of our natural love. Instead, it must come out of a love that has been "salted" and kept from corruption. This chapter shows us that Paul was personal and affectionate.