

## Exegetical Notes – Galatians 4:8-20

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### Galatians 4:8-20

#### Verses 8-11

***<sup>8</sup> Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. <sup>9</sup> But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? <sup>10</sup> You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! <sup>11</sup> I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.***

- Paul's concern for the Christians in Galatia was that before they came to know God through Jesus Christ, they were enslaved to false gods that were not truly gods at all. There is only one God, YHWH, who reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. THERE IS NO OTHER GOD BUT YHWH. All other "gods" are not gods!
- These false gods enslaved them by requiring of them certain behaviors and ritual practices which would bring them the blessings of those gods. These religions were all works based.
- Paul taught them that salvation came by God's grace. It was God's free gift to all who had faith in Him through Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works. When they came to know God, or rather WHEN THEY BECAME KNOWN BY GOD, since salvation is through His grace, they were set free from the notion that they had to please the gods they served through their works.
- But when the Judaizers came among the Galatians, they offered the Galatian Christians a base for salvation that was works based. Yes! You needed to believe that Jesus Christ was Lord and that God raised Him from the dead, but in addition to that, to please God, you needed to keep the Law of Moses, too. This was what the Galatians had known as the means of salvation prior to coming to Christ. This was a faith PLUS works based way

to God. It was what they had known as the basis for pleasing the gods before they knew Jesus.

- So, they slipped back into their old ways. They began to keep the Law of Moses and the rituals of Judaism as a way of pleasing God. They rejected the teaching of Paul, that we are saved by God's grace and receive the gift of God through our faith in Jesus alone. They were now believing that one was saved by God's grace **and** through keeping the Law of Moses.
- Paul's pastoral heart was broken for these people. He led them to God and preached to them the true Gospel. But now they are rejecting Him and His message and embracing teaching that will lead them away from God.

### **Verses 12-16**

***<sup>12</sup> I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. <sup>13</sup> As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, <sup>14</sup> and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. <sup>15</sup> Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>16</sup> Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?***

- When Paul first came to Galatia, he was ill. (We do not know the cause of his sickness. The Phrase, "you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me," is a common idiom that means "you would have given up everything to me." It may mean that Paul's problem was with his eyes, but not necessarily. What we know is that he was very ill somehow.) He did not know anyone in Galatia. He was entirely dependent on their grace for help. Thus he became "like them," entirely dependent on grace for help just as they were entirely dependent upon God's grace for salvation.
- They did not deny him the help he needed. Even though he was a burden to them, they were gracious to him as God is gracious to us all. They blessed him although he had done nothing to deserve their blessing.
- But now, they are rejecting him.

### **Verses 17-20**

***<sup>17</sup> Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. <sup>18</sup> It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am***

***with you.<sup>19</sup> My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,<sup>20</sup> how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!***

- “Those people,” the Judaizers, are wooing the Galatians, who Paul led to Christ, away from him and away from Christ. They want to make them adherents to a false Gospel.
- Being zealous for the true Gospel is a good thing. But to be zealous for a lie brings no value or blessing.
- Paul is upset, “perplexed,” because the Galatians are being led away from the true Gospel. He realized that the tone of his writing may seem offensive to them. He wishes he was there in Galatia with them to warn them more gently about this matter. But his heart is grieving for them. He speaks as he does as a pastor whose people are being led astray by false teachers.

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