Galatians – Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

💻 **828 7580 6094** ► **Thursday November 12, 2026**

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Till Christ Be Formed in You

Galatians 4:12–16 (NLT)

12 Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to live as I do in freedom from these things, for I have become like you Gentiles—free from those laws. You did not mistreat me when I first preached to you. 13 Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News. 14 But even though my condition tempted you to reject me, you did not despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus himself. 15 Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. 16 Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth?

Introduction

Until this point in the letter, Paul's approach has been confrontational and impersonal. But the apostle's approach changes dramatically in verse 12 of

chapter 4. His anger at the Judaizers subsides, and he moves from the purely doctrinal to the more personal. In fact, verses 12–20 are the strongest words of personal affection Paul uses in any of his letters. He does not so much preach or teach as simply pour out his heart in personal exhortation. He says, in effect, "I care about you more than I can say. I love you dearly just as you have loved me dearly. Please listen to what I'm saying, because it's so vitally essential."

Paul's source of gentleness was Christ Himself, as seen in his appeal to the immature and stubborn Corinthians, who continually tried his patience: "I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" **(2 Cor. 10:1).**

The apostle's spirit here reminds us that there must be a gentle side to every faithful servant of God **2 Timothy 2:24–25** says, "[24] A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. [25] Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. (NLT)

No matter how serious the doctrine he may have to defend or how corrupting the immorality he may have to expose, he dares not lose his sensitivity and compassion.

In the course of his intimate outpouring to the Galatians in 4:12–20, Paul first appeals to them, then fondly remembers their loving acceptance of him, warns them about the ulterior motives of the Judaizers, and finally tells them of his desire to be with them again in person.

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POINT 1 - HIS APPEAL TO THEM

I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. (4:12*a*) NASB

Paul's appeal to his **brethren** in Christ was for them to recognize and live by the spiritual freedom all believers have in God's grace. That is the central truth of the epistle, a truth he had previously preached and taught to the Galatians but one the Judaizers had seduced them into doubting and forsaking.

I beg of you, … become as I am, he pleaded, free from trying to earn salvation by keeping the law and free from having to live by its outward symbols, ceremonies, rituals, and restrictions. "I died to the Law, that I might live to God," he had already written **(2:19).** Now he implored them to confess again that death to the law as a way of sanctification, which death they, too, had experienced when they trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. While all believers are called to live in obedience to God's moral standards that never change (such living is the evidence of salvation, as indicated in Eph. 2:6–10), they can no more live by the law than they could have been saved by it. "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" **(5:1).**

For now, Paul presents no more arguments but rather gives a heartfelt exhortation. "You know how I have always lived since receiving Christ," he said in effect, "and how I lived while I ministered among you. That is the way I want you to live as well".

The reason for Paul's appeal is also personal: because **I also have become as you are**. When he came to Christ, he had torn away every shred of legalism, in which he had been enmeshed more tightly than perhaps few other Jews of his day (see Phil. 3:4–6). Although he now willingly became like a Jew when among Jews and like a Gentile when among Gentiles, becoming "all things to all men, that [he might] by all means save some" **(1 Cor. 9:20–22),** Paul never represented himself nor thought of himself as anything but a sinner redeemed by Jesus Christ, in whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, … slave nor free man, … male nor female" **(Gal. 3:28).** Upon the advice of the elders in the Jerusalem church, Paul agreed on one occasion to sponsor four men in taking a certain Jewish vow in the Temple, in order to keep from needlessly offending unbelieving Jews (Acts 21:23–26). But he did so as an act of his liberty as a Christian, not under the compulsion of the law.

The Jewish believers in Galatia knew well that Paul had abandoned his former rabbinic traditions, but even to the ceremonial law of Moses (cf. Acts 21:21). Many of those believers, like Paul himself, had paid a dear price when they turned from Judaism to Christ, being ostracized from their families and synagogues and treated as if dead. Yet they were now being intimidated by the Judaizers into returning to their former bondage under the law. "I introduced you to freedom," Paul was saying; "don't turn back to slavery."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (4:12)

1. **What stands out to you in this section of the lesson?**

2. What did Paul mean by become as I am in Galatians 4:12?

POINT 2 - HIS REMEMBRANCE OF THEM

You have done me no wrong;13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. 15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth? (4:12*b*–16) NASB

Paul makes a rather abrupt change of emphasis, reminding the Galatians of how rich and deep their personal relationship with him had once been. They not only had **done** him **no wrong** but had openly and lovingly received him while he was in extremely adverse personal circumstances. “How then,” he was wondering, “could you reject me now, after being so accepting of me then?”

When Paul first went to Galatia, many Jews turned against him when they realized his message was as much for Gentiles as Jews (Acts 13:45, 50; 14:19). But God used him in the salvation of many converts there, both Jews and Gentiles (13:43–14:1), and those who accepted his message also accepted him, despite a serious physical affliction he had at the time. It was, in fact, **because of a bodily illness that** Paul had **preached the gospel to** them **the first time**.

Whatever the **illness**, it **was a trial to** the Galatians, because his **bodily condition** was such that the normal response to it was disgust. But the believers there **did not despise or loathe** Paul's affliction, repulsive as it was. The Greek term behind **despise** means to count as nothing or worthless, and the term behind **loathe** literally means "to spit," which was often done as an act of contempt. Paul was treated neither as worthless nor with contempt.

The fact that Paul's affliction was not a barrier to his credibility either to the Jews or Gentiles of Galatia was totally unexpected. The apostle was amazed that they even **received** him **as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself**. They did not question what he said or the way he looked. They had no doubt that he was God's messenger and the apostolic representative of the Lord Jesus and were grateful beyond measure for the blessing of spiritual life they had received because of his ministry. After only his second message in Pisidian Antioch, the Gentiles there "began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord" **(Acts 13:48).**

But now he asked them, **Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me**. (**blessing**) can also be translated "happiness" or "satisfaction" and implies a feeling of joy, and fulfillment.

"From the beginning you were satisfied and happy with me and with the message of grace I preached," Paul was saying. "What made you lose that satisfaction?

Why have you turned against me and against the gospel of grace?" He refreshed their memories that once they loved him so much that **you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me**.

Paul may simply have been using a common figure of speech, suggesting that the Galatians would have given up their very eyesight If, as some interpreters speculate, Paul's bodily affliction was a form of eye disease, he may here have been referring to the Galatians' willingness to have literally exchanged their eyes for his, had such a transplant been **possible** in those days.

Whatever the specific nature of Paul's illness, his primary point here is clear: the Galatians had loved him with a love that would have compelled them to make any sacrifice on his behalf. After only a few years, however, the situation had radically changed. Now Paul asked in bewilderment, **Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?**

The Galatian believers who had succumbed to the Judaizing heresy were guilty of spiritual defection. Nothing tears the heart of a faithful pastor, teacher, youth worker, or missionary so much as seeing someone he has led to the Lord turn away from the faith. How much more does such defection grieve the Lord Himself ? God continually gave everything He could possibly give to His chosen people, Israel, including His own incarnate Son. They called themselves by God's name, but they refused to obey His will or come to Him in faith to have their sins forgiven.

Yet throughout Israel's rebelliousness, God's gracious offer of forgiveness stood as a beacon to call her back to Himself. "Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for your sins have brought you down.[2] Bring your confessions, and return to the LORD. Say to him, "Forgive all our sins and graciously receive us, so that we may offer you our praises" **Hosea 14:1–2 (NLT)**

The implication is that on a second trip to Galatia by Paul some of the church members there had already come under the influence of the Judaizers and had begun to doubt **the truth** of salvation by faith alone, which they had learned and accepted from him. The gospel of legalism had become more attractive to them than the gospel of grace, and the man who had been their beloved friend had become to them like an **enemy**.

Many people appreciate a preacher or teacher only as long as they say what they want to hear. The confused and defecting believers in Galatia had once greatly admired Paul, but now they looked on him as their **enemy**, because he confronted them with **the truth** about the genuine gospel of God, which had saved them, and the false teaching of the Judaizers, which led them back into the bondage of legalism. There is little doubt that among the Galatians there were also some who had never really been saved and thus were easily turned back to self-righteous legalism.

A prostitute came to a church one day looking for help. She was quite successful financially but was plagued by tremendous feelings of guilt and anxiety. She drank heavily, took drugs, and realized her life was a mess. When the Pastor explained the gospel to her and assured her that God was eager to forgive her sins and give her new life if she trusted in Jesus Christ, she expressed great interest. During the course of the conversation, she had told the Pastor of a little book in which she kept the names and phone numbers of her customers. It was suggested that they take the book and burn it right then, as a symbol of her repentance of her old life. But she said, “I can’t do that! Those names are worth thousands of dollars. I guess I don’t want Jesus as much as I thought I did.” Like

many people, she knew her way of life was wrong, but she loved it more than the Lord and would not give it up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What stands out to you in this portion of the lesson?**

2. **How did the Galatians previously treat the Apostle Paul?**

3. **Why did the Galatians receive Paul as an angel in Galatians 4:14?**

4. **Why did Paul become an enemy to the Galatians in 4:16?**

5. **What should we do when relationships with spiritual mentors change ?**

6. **What was meaningful to you in this lesson that you can apply in your life.**

CLOSING PRAYER