

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON GALATIANS 4:8-20

Paul continues his plea for the Galatian Church not to fall into trying to earn their salvation by keeping the Jewish laws. This would be the same as falling under the slavery they experienced when they were worshipping pagan gods. When they believed in the gospel of Jesus they were set free from this need to obey certain commands and rituals why would they now return to this way of living - it's insanity.

Paul goes on to remind them of his history with them; how they were concerned for him when he first got to know them and of the great friendship they use to enjoy. He is not arguing with them now because he is their enemy but out of great love and care for them.

Paul doesn't understand how the Galatians can turn aside from the Truth. He is unsure how best to help them and what words to encourage or chide them. He is afraid that they may fall away from the Gospel altogether.

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WARMING UP

1. What defines a Christian? As a Christian what things do you feel you ought to do?
2. How do you give someone advice when it's not what they want to hear?

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Galatians 4:8 - 11

3. What is Paul's concern for the Galatian Christians?
4. What are the elementary principles of the world (spiritual principles / forces) he describes at the end of verse 9? Do we live by these principles?

Read Galatians 4:12 - 20

5. What does Paul mean in verse 12 when he says "become as I am, for I also have become as you are"?
6. How had the relationship between Paul and the Galatian Church changed? Is this change one sided?
7. What instigated this change in the relationship between Paul and the Galatian Church?
8. What does this passage teach us about living as a church community?

MOVING FORWARD

The Galatian Church were returning to the world principles of trying to earn their own salvation - maybe not by following the pagan rituals they use to but instead by following the Jewish laws.

Do we often think that we can be 'better Christian's by doing 'Christian things'?

In the sermon Bert talked about how we may not worship physical idols but that we often make ourselves an idol.

How do you define yourself? (What personality traits / actions / interests / status / etc. do you hold important in defining your image?)

Do these things take priority over or detract from our identity as children of God?

LIFE TOGETHER

You can almost see Paul's heart breaking with his concern for the Galatian church.

How can we as a Church encourage one another when going through hard times? Particularly how do we help those on the fringes of Church or those struggling with aspects of the Biblical teachings and belief?

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These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Galatians 4:8 - 11

3. What is Paul's concern for the Galatian Christians?

Paul is worried that the Galatian Church will forget the Gospel of living by faith and acceptance of what Jesus had done and instead try and earn their salvation again by following the Mosaic law. They were set free from this way of living.

A lot of pagan religions are about appeasing the gods and striking deals with them to get what you want. There is no sense of a personal caring relationship instead it is one of fear (not the good kind) and obligation. Verse 9 highlights the fact that God knows you the Galatian Christians can have a living relationship with Him, one where he actually care for their wellbeing and wants the best for them.

4. What are the elementary principles of the world (spiritual principles / forces) he describes at the end of verse 9? Do we live by these principles?

The elementary principles are trying to work our own salvation. It's one of self reliance based on our own merit not on relying on God.

Read Galatians 4:12 - 20

5. What does Paul mean in verse 12 when he says "become as I am, for I also have become as you are"?

Paul use to be a super keen Jew who kept every single command that the ultra religious Pharisees said you had to keep, but he gave up all these things because he understood that they were not enough to get him to heaven. Instead he lived as the Gentiles, that is he no longer kept the many traditions that were set down by the Pharisees. He "counts them all as lost" and trusts instead in the righteousness that he gains through trusting in Jesus. (Philippians 3:3-9)

6. How had the relationship between Paul and the Galatian Church changed? Is this change one sided?

When Paul first came to the Galatians they helped look after him and was deeply concerned for him. Now they're suspicious of him and treat him like an enemy. The change is on the side of the Galatians. Paul was deeply concerned for them when he first taught them about Jesus and even now he is still concerned for them.

7. What instigated this change in the relationship between Paul and the Galatian Church?

False teachers had come into the Church and teaching that they needed to be circumcised and keep certain religious festivals and teachings. This goes against what Paul taught them. Possibly the false teachers were trying to cast doubt on Paul's motives and cut him off from the Galatian Church so that they would be the authority head that the Church would depend on.

Verse 18 : Doing good things is good if the motive is good - but what are the motives of these people with teachings that contradict the basic gospel teachings?

8. What does this passage teach us about living as a church community?