

Sunday, July 23, 2023—Galatians 4:11-20 I Stand in Doubt of You

Galatians 4:11

- **I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.**
- As Paul hears about how these Galatians were reverting to the elementary principles of the Law, he fears for how real their relationship with Christ actually is.
- **I am afraid of you**—is an interesting expression. The word translated “afraid” here is elsewhere rendered “fear” 62 times by the King James translators.
 - Matthew 1:20
 - Matthew 10:26, 28, 31
 - Matthew 14:27, 30
- Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828) defines fear as follows:
 - “Impressed with fear or apprehension; fearful. This word expresses a less degree of fear than terrified or frightened. It is followed by of before the object of fear; as, to be *afraid* of death.”
- So, Paul was “afraid” of the Galatians i.e., “you.” In what sense was Paul afraid of the Galatians? The next clause answers that for us.
- **lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain**—Paul was questioning if the Galatians had really understood his message of justification by grace through faith apart from works i.e., the deeds of the Law.
 - Galatians 4:20
- Paul knew it was possible for people to make an empty or false profession of faith in Christ.
 - I Corinthians 15:2
 - Colossians 1:23
- All efforts to keep the Law are inconsistent with total dependence upon Christ for salvation.

Galatians 4:12

- **Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.**
- Paul beseeches the Galatians to be as he is while emphasizing that they have not injured him.

- Paul tried, as much as he could, to identify with his listeners so as to remove as many barriers as possible that might prevent them from believing the gospel.
 - I Corinthians 9:21-23
 - II Corinthians 11:29
- If one feels that he has offended or mistreated another person, he is likely to avoid that person; therefore, Paul emphasizes the fact that they have not mistreated him. He wants them to thoroughly understand that he holds nothing against them personally.

Galatians 4:13-15

- **13) Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14) And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15) Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.**
- Paul now begins to recount what happened when he was formerly with them and points out that, instead of wronging him, they had given him excellent treatment.
- Paul does not tell us what this physical ailment was, but it apparently affected his outward appearance.
- The Galatians, in the face of this distracting physical ailment, had proved themselves to be more than average self-centered people. They had manifested a genuine concern and compassion for Paul and did not let his physical appearance hinder their acceptance of his message.
- In view of what happened since Paul was last with them, he now wants to know what happened to their blessedness, i.e., where is your solicitous attitude and life which they had once demonstrated to him?

Galatians 4:16

- **Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?**
- Why was there a change in their attitude toward Paul? Why were they leaving the principles of grace and reverting to the Law system?
- It appears as if the Judaizers had so affected their thinking that they now viewed Paul as their enemy.

Galatians 4:17-18

- **17) They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.**
18) But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.
- In this verse Paul exposes the true motives of the Judaizers.
- **zealously affect**—means to burn with zeal. The idea here is to zealously strive after. The context indicates that, with a selfish zeal, the Judaizers zealously courted the attention and friendship of the Galatians.
- The Judaizers’ zealous pursuit of the Galatians was morally suspect. They did not really care about them, but were driven by selfish motives.
- **exclude**—means to shut out, to turn out of doors, to prevent the approach of one.
- Following the context, since Paul was speaking about the truth in verse 16, it logically follows that they were trying to exclude the Galatians from the truth.
 - Galatians 2:5
 - Galatians 1:7
- To the extent that the Judaizers were successful in excluding the Galatians from the truth, they were adding to their potential followers. By doing so, the Judaizers were adding to their own prestige and strengthening their own numbers.
- In verse 18, Paul tells the Galatians there is nothing wrong with zeal as long as it is pointed in the right direction.
 - Ephesians 5:16
 - I Timothy 4:11
- Romans 12:11—outside of church and when our spiritual advisors are not around, we need to be doing what is right.

Galatians 4:19-20

- **19) My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,**
20) I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.
- The Greek word translated “children” carries the idea of a young, small child. This is the only time this phrase is used in any of Paul’s epistles.

- In light of the context, Paul is not using it as a term of endearment or affection.
 - I John 2:1, 3:18—when John uses the term, it is more positive in nature.
- The phrase in Paul’s usage carries a derogatory tone. Paul is literally calling them spiritually immature children.
 - I Corinthians 3:1
- **I travail in birth again**—travail literally means to experience the pains of giving birth.
- Paul obviously is not talking about giving birth to them in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense. He is speaking about their spiritual birth.
- Paul is using the pain of childbirth to represent the time, energy, and labor that he expended in order that the Galatians might know Christ. If we are going to conduct the ministry according to the Pauline ministry pattern, we are literally going to have to fight for every convert.
- Also please note the use of the word “again” in verse 19. This is not the first time Paul expended himself on behalf of the Galatians.
- **until Christ be formed in you**—every believer, when they get saved, receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. You are placed into Christ and Christ comes and lives in you.
- What Paul is talking about in this verse is letting that edification or maturing process take place inside you. If the Galatians had left the grace of God in favor of Law keeping, there would not have been much edification.
 - Colossians 1:27
 - II Corinthians 4:11
- Verse 20 is straight forward yet extremely profound when you understand what Paul is saying.
- **I stand in doubt of you**—Paul is questioning whether the Galatians had truly believed the gospel to begin with. The Galatians were outwardly good people. They were not involved in overt sins of the flesh.
 - I Corinthians 5:1—the Corinthians on the other hand, had been an extremely carnal church. People would have looked at them and thought there is not any way those people could be saved.
- Yet Paul never questions the salvation of the Corinthians like he does the Galatians.