

A Plea from a Perplexed Pastor

Galatians 4:12-20

“In Galatians 1-3 we have been listening to Paul the apostle, Paul the theologian, Paul the defender of the faith; but now we are hearing Paul the man, Paul the pastor, Paul the passionate lover of souls.”
(John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p.111)

I. Do you know the Freedom of God’s Grace?

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. So you are no longer a slave, but a son. (Galatians 4:4–7)

You are no longer a _____ who must satisfy his master!

You are a _____ who wants to please His Father and obey him out of love.

Paul is perplexed

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

The only _____ to worshipping the true God is to worship a non god.

The Galatians are in danger of being _____ to Religion!

“You observe days and months and seasons and years!” (v.10)

Any religion that is based on observing special days is dangerous because it *reduces relationship to a ritual*

We must keep _____ ourselves who we are in Christ.

One of the great purposes in daily Bible reading, meditation, and prayer is just this, to get ourselves correctly oriented, to _____ who we are. *“Once I was a slave, but God has made me His son and put the Spirit of His Son into my heart. How can I turn back to the old slavery?”* (John Stott, *Galatians*, p.110)

II. Do you enjoy the Ministry of God’s Word?

A 2nd distinguishing mark of God’s children is that they _____ their Father’s instruction!

What then has become of the blessing you felt? (Galatians 4:15)

Paul’s Providential First Visit to Galatia

*You know it was because of a **bodily ailment** that I preached the gospel to you at first* (Galatians 4:13).

What was this _____?

- Some scholars think he may have picked up **malaria** in the mosquito-infested swamps of Pamphylia on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Perhaps this was the beginning of his “thorn in the flesh” that tormented Paul for many years
- Another possibility is that Paul had chronic problems with his eyesight (*Galatians 4:15*)

For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

1. God _____ our problems to achieve His purposes

Paul’s infirmity became God’s opportunity. *His power is made perfect in Paul’s weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9)

God uses our suffering to bring about far greater purposes that lead to His _____. (Rom. 8)

2. We are to welcome God’s Word through His messenger with warmest hospitality

“Though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 4:14)

They _____ God’s Word and welcomed Paul as they would Jesus Christ himself.

But their hospitality soon turned to _____

Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? (Galatians 4:16)

Paul's gospel message did not change

But the Galatians had been poisoned with lies from the Judaizers and began to reject the one true gospel

“Ministers who are faithful to God’s Word often tell people things that they _____ want to hear.

But if it really is God’s message, God’s true children rejoice to hear it. They know that if their loving Father is telling them something they would prefer not to hear, it must be for their own _____.”

(Phillip Ryken, *Galatians*, 176)

III. Transformed into the life of God’s Son

Something happens to those who _____ God’s Word

The more they gaze into His Word, the more they start to look like Jesus Christ.

As Paul puts it in v. 19, “*Christ is formed in you!*”

Paul’s opponents wanted to change people too

“They make much of you, but for no good purpose.” (Galatians 4:17).

They tried to win the Galatians over to their perverted gospel by _____ them

They were proud and wanted the Galatians to “*make much of them*”

What they really wanted were their own disciples, as _____ teachers always do.

Whereas, Paul had no interest in having his own disciples

The only disciples Paul was interested in were the kind that follow Christ and *make much of* _____!

Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are (Galatians 4:12).

He became so integrated into the life of the community in Galatia that he practically became a Galatian. He explained the gospel in words they could understand and made applications _____ to their culture. Paul was careful *not to follow any Jewish cultural practices* that might *have hindered his evangelism among Gentiles*.

Imitate me as I imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1)

Paul’s ultimate _____ was to see Christ take shape in the lives of his people

Christ had transformed and re-formed Paul’s life.

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20)

This ought to be the goal of every pastor: not the favor of men, but the formation of Christ!

John Calvin said; *‘If ministers wish to be something, let them labor to form Christ, not themselves, in their hearers.’*

My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! (Gal 4:19)

A mother’s sacrificial love is so much like _____ sacrificial love

Christ on the cross

Jesus felt so ugly and deformed that people turned their faces _____ from him.

He was so vulnerable as he hung naked and exposed with his arms spread out on the cross!

He labored to take his next breath. It was so bloody and painful!

Jesus went through a painful, bloody death so that we could be born again!

He _____ on the cross so that we might have eternal _____.