

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

How Do You Respond to the Truth? Galatians 4:12-20

Paul pleads, "Become as I am" - free from the bondage of Jewish Law (Gal 4:12)

- Paul addresses them as brothers in Christ, and he begs them to change their behavior. He became like them (Gentile-like in his lifestyle), so now he wants them to become like him (free from slavery to a system of ordinances).
- "You have done me no wrong" = Paul's request was not based on a feeling of being personally offended by the Galatians. As painful as it may have been to Paul, he was asking them to return to the truth for a much higher reason: it was for their own good and for the good of the cause of Christ as a whole. Paul demonstrates great character in saying that he did not consider their desertion as a personal offense.

A look at the former loving relationship between Paul and the Galatians (Gal 4:13-14)

- Paul reminds them of the relationship they enjoyed when he was first with them.
- During his first missionary journey, Paul became ill and required medical attention when he was in the region of Galatia. The circumstances of Paul's first meeting with the Galatians were certainly not ideal, but they responded to him with overwhelming kindness.
- Paul's sickness was something that would normally evoke a response of disgust, but they received Paul as if he were an angel or even Christ Himself. This was the occasion when he first shared the gospel with them and they responded in faith. Here is a perfect example of the sovereignty of God - despite all of our best plans, God often uses the unexpected twists and turns of life to bring glory to Himself!

So, What Happened? Has God's truth now made them enemies? (Gal 4:15-16)

- Paul wonders what happened to that loving relationship they had at first.
- "Plucked out your eyes" may have been a figure of speech (like our expression, "I'd cut off my right arm to help him"). Or it could indicate that Paul's sickness was some form of eye disease.
- Despite this former loving relationship, they now regarded Paul as their enemy. It is amazing how fickle we human beings can be! He gives the real reason for this change: Paul was telling them the truth, and often people do not respond well to hearing the truth.

The false teachers have dishonest motives: they want to *lock in* the Galatians as their own followers (Gal 4:17)

- Here Paul uncovers the real motivation of the false teachers. "They are *zealously paying you court* in order to win you over to their side" - and they were not doing this in an honorable way.
- "They wish to shut you out" = to close the Galatians off from associating with other teachers who do not belong to the false teachers' party or faction. Or possibly even to cut them off from Christ Himself.
- The false teachers' reason for doing this was "so that you will seek them." By isolating the Galatians from others, the false teachers could keep them as their own exclusive followers.

There is nothing wrong with enlisting followers, as long as the cause is true and right. But the Galatians must seek truth, even when Paul is absent (Gal 4:18)

- But... Paul emphasizes that drawing people toward what is good, and doing it in an honorable way, is perfectly reasonable. But the false teachers were not doing this.
- Paul reminds the Galatians that it is good to be zealous for God's truth even when he is not present with them. They should not give lip service to the truth while God's messenger is present, but desert the truth as soon as God's messenger departs.

Paul worries about his dear children: he wants them to grow to maturity in Christ, and he wishes he could tell them personally what they need to know rather than relying on the letter he is writing (Gal 4:19-20)

- "My dear little children" (*teknia mou*) = from *tikto*, bearing children. This is the language of loving affection.
- Paul feels as if he is again in the process of childbirth with them. He will continue to labor on their behalf until Christ is formed in them. The ultimate goal of the new birth is complete maturity in Christ. But their behavior demonstrated that the Galatians required renewed spiritual labor on their behalf.
- Paul want to be with them in person so that he can "change his voice" by speaking to them more as a father than as a debater.
- "I am perplexed" = *to be at wit's end*. He is not certain how to touch them and correct them through this letter.

We must continue to listen to God's truth, even when it may be uncomfortable. We must also stand alone for God's truth against persuasive false teachers. We can gain strength and encouragement by remembering those who taught us the truths of God's Word.

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