

WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE



Galatians 4:8-20--November 19th, 2023

Sermon Recap:

A Heart to Heart

In this passage, Paul as a concerned pastor has a heart to heart with the Galatians. He is afraid (v.11), pleading (v.12), in anguish (v.19), and perplexed (v.20) over the backsliding that has happened in the church.

I. The Possible Slide (v.8-11)

- In v.1-7, Paul has explained how believers have been set free from the captivity of the law. We are no longer slaves.
- Through Paul's preaching of the gospel, the Galatians have been "known by God."
 - It was God who took initiative. It was God who found us, saved us; he did the work.
 - In humility and grace he condescended, he stooped, reaching down to set the captive free.
- They were turning back to "weak and worthless elementary principles" (legalistic religion and obedience).
- Backsliding does not just mean turning back to sinful living. It can also be a turning back to a religion of self-righteous, works based salvation.

II. The Tragedy of the Slide (v.12-16)

- Paul had witnessed evidence of their salvation through the "blessedness" they displayed by ministering to Paul in his illness when he first arrived.
 - Despite his appearance, they listened to and received the gospel that Paul preached.
- The tragedy is that, now, even though Paul is still preaching the same gospel, they are treating him as an enemy.

III. The Reason for the Slide (v.17-20)

- The backsliding occurred because false teachers has "made much of you" (v.17).
 - They used flattery to manipulate the church into doing and saying what they wanted.
 - Their motivation was not to serve the church or make much of Christ, but that the church would make much of them.

IV. The Remedy for the Slide

- Paul pleads, "become as I am."
 - Having been a Pharisee of Pharisees and Hebrew of Hebrews, Paul knew the law, the rituals, and the traditions. But having heard the gospel, he knew that all of those "elementary principles are worthless."
 - He asks them to know that their salvation is not found in their righteousness, but in Christ's.
- His greatest concern for them is that Christ would be formed in them (v.19).
- When we begin to drift, the solution is not to do more or do better. It is to get back to Christ. Repent and turn to him.

Discussion Questions:

- What is Paul's tone and emotion in this passage? What words and phrases contribute to this tone?
- What is the difference between knowing God and being known by God? Why is this important?
- In Galatians 4:7, Paul says we're changed from slaves to sons and heirs as recipients of the gospel. The Galatians seems to be returning to slavery in Galatians 4:8-20. How are they returning to slavery, and why?
- What are some of the "weak and worthless elementary principles" by which non-Christians live their lives?
- Read v.12-16. How did the Galatians initially respond to Paul's ministry and preaching?
- What had Paul done that had made him an "enemy" to the Galatians?
- What does Paul mean when he urges the Galatians to be like him?
- Read v.18-20. What is Paul's great concern for the Galatians?

Application:

- Some Galatians oppose Paul for preaching the truth of the gospel (Galatians 4:16). Why is the truth sometimes hard for us to hear? What truth is especially hard for you to understand/believe? Why?
- In 4:17, Paul says, "They make much of you, but for no good purpose." In other words, the false teachers are flatterers. What similar philosophies do we face in our own culture? How can we become aware of the danger of flattery in our own lives?
- What kinds of weak and worthless forces or elementary principles can Christians turn to today? What is the impact? Do you see tendencies in your own life to slide into these elementary principles?
- According to Paul, how do we remedy backsliding?
- What does it look like when "Christ is formed" in a person? How are you experiencing this personally?

