

CONCERNS FOR THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION: Paul takes the churches in Galatia down memory lane of the time he spent with them. He brings to their remembrance a time when they would have done absolutely anything for him. He shares with them his paternal heart and desire for them to be blessed as they walk in the truth of the Gospel.

Galatians 4:8-20

I. THE DANGER OF RETURNING TO BONDAGE *vv.8-11*

A. Paul reminds them of their past when they were enslaved to false gods. *v.8*

1. The Galatian culture was devoted in the worship of false gods, building monuments and temples for them.
2. Interestingly, the Galatians initially thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. *Acts 14:8-12*
3. It was easy for the Galatians to fall into the trap of “works” because of their old religious mindset. *2 Corinthians 6:14-16, John 17:16-18*

B. He is bewildered that they desire to return to bondage.

1. Paul reminds the Galatians that they have established a relationship with God. *v.9*
2. He refers to this as weak and beggarly, which means useless or without power to influence.
3. He notes that they are now shifting the bondage of old into a new bondage. *v.10, Romans 12:1*

C. His fear is that he may have labored in vain for them. *v.11*

1. There is great concern that his gospel message has been turned into a works oriented gospel.
2. This means that if they were in turn to share this type of message with others, those hearing would not truly be saved by grace through faith.
3. It hurt Paul to contemplate the failure of his work in Galatia.
2 Timothy 4:5-7

II. THE MEMORY OF A HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP *vv.12-16*

A. He recalls how they first received him despite his affliction.

1. First of all, Paul had become like the Galatians. *v.12, 1 Corinthians 9:19-22*
2. He speaks of his physical infirmity, which is in reference to him being stoned and left for dead. *v. 13, Acts 14:19-22*
3. Paul notes that they would have done absolutely anything for him at that point. *vv.14-15*

B. He wants to know what happened to their former immense devotion they once held for him.

1. We truly get the sense that Paul is somewhat baffled by their forgetfulness regarding all he had done.
2. Paul was the one that had established disciples in the church, appointing elders and praying for them. *Acts 14:23*

3. The Galatians had a wavering mindset as a people, with a history of running with whomever was the strongest leader at the time.

C. He now wants to know if they consider him an enemy. *v.16*

1. He's telling them the truth and they're treating him like an enemy.
2. The lies of the Judaizers fed into their old practices.
3. He had preached the "almost too good to be true" gospel.
2 Corinthians 11:3

III. THE CONTRAST OF MOTIVATIONS *vv.17-20*

A. Paul warns of the Judaizers' selfish motivation to alienate them from Paul.

1. Paul pointedly asserts that the reason the Judaizers are courting is for the purpose of feeding their own ego. *v.17*
2. Part of the Judaizers strategy was to alienate them from Paul.
3. He states that it's good to have zeal, but only for the right purpose.
v.18

B. His deep love for them is that of a mother. *v.19*

1. Paul uses an endearing term to let them know how much he cares for them. *1 Corinthians 4:15*
2. Paul feels like he is going through the whole process again of teaching them the truth.
3. More than anything else, he wants to see Christ fully developed in their lives. *Ephesians 3:17-19*

C. His true heart's desire is to be present with them in hopes that he can change his tone. v.20

1. He knows that if he could just be there with them, he could be instrumental in turning things back around.

Philippians 2:12-13 NLT

2. He knows that he is being very blunt and coming across as harsh.

3. Because he is not able to be there, he is at a loss as to what to do.

CONCLUSION: Paul concludes that turning back to legalism is no different from their former paganism. For both Jew and Gentile, relying on "weak and worthless elementary principles" (like special days and rituals) to earn God's favor is a return to bondage after having been "known by God" through grace. He reminds them of the mutual love they have for each other and he's hoping he can somehow, someway convince them to return to the truth of the Gospel.