

Sunday, February 21, 2010—Grace Life School of Theology—Understanding Galatians and the Law—Galatians 4:8-18

### **Galatians 4:8**

- *“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.”*
- Verse eight builds upon what Paul has already said in verses six and seven.
- Galatians 3:28 says that in the Body of Christ there is no more Jew or Gentile. Here in chapter four, Paul is picking on this idea to demonstrate the inferiority of the law for both Jews and Gentiles.
- In verses one through five, Paul is showing how Israel under the law was in bondage under the elements of the world. Therefore, why would a Jewish person want to go back under that elementary system?
- Now in verse eight, Paul turns his attention to his Gentile converts who had been deceived into following the law.
- *“Howbeit then, when ye knew not God”*
- Did the gentiles always know who God was? No. God gave them over at the Tower of Babel to their reprobate mind and suffered them to walk in their own way.
  - Romans 1:19-28—notice what the Gentiles did with the knowledge of God they possessed. They invented their own system of idolatry.
  - Acts 17:29-31—God winked at the times of ignorance.
- *“ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.”*
- During the times of ignorance, the Gentiles served gods of their own creation.
- I Corinthians 8:4-6—these other so-called gods are not really gods at all. This is only one true living God.

### **Galatians 4:9**

- *“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”*
- The expression “but now” places verse nine in contrast with verse eight.
- According to this verse when did God know the Gentiles? He only knew them after they had chosen to know Him. What are the implications of this verse upon the Calvinistic teachings that God knew you and choose you for salvation while you were still dead in trespasses and sins?

- Paul asks the Galatians the following question. How in the world now that you know God and have been delivered from pagan religion can you go back to the weak and beggarly elements?
- Weak (772)—is the idea of being feeble, sick, or without strength (Strong’s). The primary sense of the root is to yield, fail, give way, recede, or to be soft (Webster’s 1828).
- Beggarly—mean; poor; in the condition of a beggar; extremely indigent (Webster’s 1828).
- The Greek word translated “elements” is the same one found in verse three. Once again, the law is an elementary system because it is based upon rudimentary principles. Paul is asking these gentiles why they would want to subject themselves to such an elementary system.
  - Colossians 2:20-22
- It is critical to follow Paul’s train of thought in this section. Paul uses the same terms to describe under the Law as he does to describe pagan Gentiles idol worship. Consequently, following the law for a gentile is no different from worshiping an idol.
- The Galatians once served idols, which were not real gods. By purposing to go back under elementary principles of the Law they might as well return to worshiping the dead idols they used to serve.

#### **Galatians 4:10**

- *“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.”*
- This verse is clearly a reference to the Mosaic Law. Days refers to the weekly Sabbath, months to the Jewish calendar used to determine when the feasts would occur, times is a reference to the feasts themselves, and years to the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee.
- How many people today try to honor the weekly Sabbath? Many. How many people today honor the sabbatical year or the year of Jubilee? Not many.
- Colossians 2:14-17—teaches that Christ killed the law with him upon the cross. Therefore, it is foolish, weak, and beggarly to place yourself back under the bondage to these principles.

#### **Galatians 4:11-12**

- *“I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. 12) Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.”*
- As Paul hears about how these Galatians were reverting back to the elementary principles of the Law, he fears for how real their relationship with Christ actually is.

- 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.
- Paul tried as much as he could to identify with his listeners so as to remove as many barriers 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**

- *“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 had 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 live with 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 back 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**

- *“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 zealously pursuit of the Galatians was morally suspect. They were 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 truly 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 with zeal as long as it is pointed in the right direction.
  - Ephesians 5:16
  - I Timothy 4:11
- Romans 12:11—we need to be doing what is right outside of church and when our spiritual advisors are not around.