

Galatians

Return Church

Lesson #8

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

October 15, 2025

Galatians 4:12-20

Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I *became* like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you *enjoyed*? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously court you, *but* for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you. ***Galatians 4:12-20 NKJV***

Galatians

- It is good to go through the Bible verse by verse for several reasons.
- The main reason is to make us deal with things we might otherwise skip over. If you don't allow the Bible to contradict your life, how will you ever change?
- If you are a mature believer, you like to help people change their lives for the better, you like to help free them.
- Paul is simply trying to do this, arguing against the false teachers and their false doctrines.

The perverted or reversed lie of the false teachers:

- False teachers taught to believe on Jesus Christ + obey the law and you will be saved.

The Truth of the Gospel that Paul taught.

- Paul taught them to believe on Jesus Christ, and you are saved, then you will want to obey the law.

Become like me, for I became like you

*Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. **Galatians 4:12 NKJV***

- In this verse you have a remarkable statement on how to help someone change their life.
- I became like you. When he came to Galatia, he was flexible. Paul learned what their culture was like. What they ate, what they wore. He adapted his ministry to their issues, their culture and customs. He became like them.

*To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. **1 Corinthians 9:22 NKJV***

- However, Paul was inflexible about the gospel. I will die for that. I will take on the Apostle Peter over the gospel. I will fight for the gospel. If an angel comes down and preaches another gospel, throw him out. But he was flexible on everything else.
- Don't sweat the details. It is a sign of spiritual immaturity when you you think everybody has to do every detail just exactly the way you believe they should do them. They have to dress like you, eat like you, wear their hair like you, listen to your music, etc....

Become like me, for I became like you

- I remember when I discovered a member of Return telling someone that was outside smoking that he needed to stop smoking, or he was going to go to hell. I wanted to throw that man out of the building. That is the last thing you should tell someone new in recovery.
- Paul is not going to let them stay as they are. He wanted them to change.
- Lots of people say “become like me,..... I’m waiting”.
- Paul is saying become like me, because I became like you.
- Paul left his Jewish customs and culture, to become like the Gentiles. He ate like them, he gave up a life-time of training to keep the Jewish laws. He became like them so He could share the gospel with them effectively.
- Paul was flexible, respectable, humble, not sweating the details, yet on the other hand he was very strong and not flexible when it came to the gospel.

Be submissive

- This entire text tells you that you need ministers. Teachers, preachers, and other people that have Jesus in the center of their lives.
- You need to have somebody who is ahead of you, that is more spiritually mature than you are, to help hold you accountable. Or you are disobeying the Bible.
- Every believer needs to be a part of a church.
- Every believer needs a pastor, a mentor, a life coach?

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. **Hebrews 13:17 NKJV***

Labor pains

*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, **Galatians 4:19 NKJV***

Pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. Wow! Interesting language for a guy. Once you have children, there goes your heart. You need for your kids to be happy, in order for you to be happy.

*For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. **1 Thessalonians 3:8 NKJV***

- When I got the message that you are doing well, now I live.
- When you become a minister its like becoming a mother, your heart goes to your children.

Labor pains

- Galatians is a polemical letter, Paul is arguing against the false teachers with very strong language for the first 3 chapters of Galatians.
- Then in chapter 4 we see Paul weeping. The reason I am fighting about this, because this is a life and death issue. My dear children, I'm having pains of childbirth.
- Here you see Paul trying to be a friend to them. The same truth that would be like a sword becomes a scapple. This is a love letter.
- Paul is bearing children. When he brings truth to bear upon people's hearts through this kind of relationship, he sees people being born into Christ through him, he becomes a spiritual mother.
- Are you bringing people into the Christian family?

Until Christ is formed in you

*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed
In you, **Galatians 4:19 NKJV***

This scripture clearly states that even though the people of the new Galatian churches were saved, they still needed for Christ to be formed in them.

Getting saved is only the beginning of your spiritual journey, it will take the rest of your life for Christ to be formed in you completely.

Galatians 4:21-31

Tell me, you who want to live under the law, do you know what the law actually says? The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise. These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them. And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery to the law. But the other woman, Sarah, represents the heavenly Jerusalem. She is the free woman, and she is our mother. As Isaiah said, Rejoice, O childless woman, you who have never given birth! Break into a joyful shout, you who have never been in labor! For the desolate woman now has more children than the woman who lives with her husband! And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac. But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit. But what do the Scriptures say about that? Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son. So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman. ***Galatians 4:21-31 NLT***

Abraham had 2 sons

- This passage is very doctrinal in nature. A somewhat difficult passage. I am not going to spend much time on it.
- The false teachers came in and said, Paul said you are Children of Abraham, you are going to have to start obeying the law to purify yourself from your pagan past. You need to believe in Jesus, plus you also need to keep the Jewish ceremonial law in order to be saved.
- Paul counter attacks; he said, you want to talk about Abraham, I will talk about Abraham. For Abraham had 2 sons, from two different women and there were also 2 covenants.
- There was the son of the slave woman Hagar, named Ishmael, and the son of the free woman Sarah, named Isaac.

The child of promise

- God came to Abraham and Sarah and promised them a child. As the years went by, they became very old and were barren.
- Sarah came up with an idea, maybe her husband could sleep with her slave woman and have a child through his own human effort and ability.
- Abraham had a choice, he could wait upon God and do things God's way, or he would take matters into his own hands, and through his own human effort & ability he could have a child.
- So, Abraham and Hagar had Ishmael. And today all of the conflict in the Middle East between the Arabs and the Jews is a result of Abraham's bad choice.
- A few years later, miraculously, Sarah had Isaac.
- Now he had two sons. The son of Abraham's human effort and the son of God's promise.
- 2 different approaches to God. Do I continue to wait upon God, or do I try to do it by my own human strength.

You have a choice

- Abraham messed up his own life by not waiting upon God, by not trusting in the promise of God. By putting his trust in his own human ability instead of trusting in the Lord.
- You also have a choice, you can be a slave by trying to keep to the law. Or you can be saved by grace. Look at what Jesus did for you!
- You Galatians, if you listen to these false teachers, you will be a slave.
- Or you can listen to the gospel, and you will be free.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, ***Romans 1:16 NKJV***

Galatians 5:1-12

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be* justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! **Galatians 5:1-12 NKJV**

Freedom

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ***Galatians 5:1 NKJV***

- Jesus makes us free from sin, not free to sin.
- Jesus has freed us from the law. Which means we no longer try to do good, or keep God's laws to try and save, justify or redeem ourself.
- We are freed from trying to keep religious rules, regulations and rituals in an effort to be accepted by God.
- We are freed from trying to be holy and righteous in by our own effort, and in our own strength, hoping to receive a blessing or greater reward from God.

Context of Galatians 5

- Paul planted a group of churches in Galatia, and he established them with the gospel. He taught that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved and as a result, you will live a good life, a changed life. He taught them that you are accepted by God by faith in Jesus Christ alone.
- Then the false teachers came in and said that belief in Jesus is not enough, but you also have to live a good life, you have to keep the law in order to be saved. They said good works has got to be a part of the basis on why God accepts you.
- The question is this: how does telling people that God loves and accepts them no matter what they do, possibly motivate them toward a life of good, clean and holy living?
- How could that be an incentive to live a good moral life?
- A lot of people think this idea of free grace will lead to slack or ungodly living.
- Here in chapter 5 Paul explains how the gospel is a greater incentive toward a life of holiness and love than anything else.

The gospel

- The world-wide problem is that evil lives in every human heart, even the heart of children. Paul is saying that the gospel is the only hope we have to change the human heart.
- Gospel transformation is different than moral reformation. Gospel transformation changes you from the inside out.
- Take a rod of iron that is bent. You can take your hand and bend it back, now the rod is far weaker than before. If you bend it again and again, it will break off, but if you put it in the fire until it glows, then you can shape it and make it straight, where it wont break.
- You can bend your life back by behavior modification, or will power, human effort, or through the gospel you can put your soul in the fire, when you are shaped through that you will be changed, transformed.
- When you see the gospel it changes you, it makes you a Godly person.

What is your motivation?

- Paul is saying, that the reason we obey God is important. The difference between Paul and these false teachers is the reason or the motives of why we obey God.
- The reason or motivation is everything.
- Of course, Paul is saying **we must obey the truth**, but why?
- Paul is saying if you obey God for the wrong reasons or wrong motive, it is as bad as disobeying God.
- When Paul says if you think that obeying the law can win you Gods favor what you are actually doing is disobeying the law.
- The question is; what is the motivation for you to live a good moral life? Why do you pray and study your Bible? Why do you serve & obey God?

Motives

All a person's ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the Lord. ***Proverbs 16:2 NIV***

Ask yourself, why do you serve or obey the Lord?

1. If no one ever knows what I am doing (giving, serving, sacrificing), would I still do it?
2. Would I joyfully take a lesser position if God asked me to?
3. Could I walk away from my ministry and give it to another?
4. Am I doing this for the praise of others or how it makes me feel?
5. If serving God caused me to suffer or be persecuted, would I still do it?
6. If those I am serving never show gratitude in any way, will I still do it?
7. Can I continue serving God if I am suffering in my health, finances, or relationships.

Wrong motives

Obeying God with the wrong motives:

1. Are you obedient because you are trying to earn God's favor, acceptance or rewards? Are you living a good moral life because you want God to bless you or answer your prayers or reward you? You are using God for your own gain. If you feed the poor with this motive, you are using the poor.
2. Are you obedient because you are afraid of God? Do you have a fear of missing the rapture or the bride? Do you fear that God will reject you, or cast you into outer darkness if you don't toe the line or live holy?
3. Do you serve God to feel better about yourself. You are using God for self-acceptance, or to forgive yourself, or to rid yourself of guilt.
4. Do you serve God to build up your name or reputation in the community. Do you want the members of your church to look up to you? Do you expect people to show gratitude and be thankful for things you do for them.

Don't try and use God

- A gardener grew a carrot and took it to his king. This is the greatest carrot I have ever grown, I want to give this to you, the king was impressed, so he gave him 2 more acres of land.
- The neighbor heard about this, so he gave a horse to the king, the king discerned his heart, and decided to take his horse. His motive for giving the king the horse was to get more horses from the king.
- If you have ever done anything for God in order to earn his acceptance or His approval, or to get Him to bless or reward you? You are doing it for yourself. You are trying to use God.
- If you are feeding the poor with this attitude, you are using the poor.
- If you help a little ole lady cross the street because you want God to bless you, you are using her for your own gain.

Right motives

We love Him because He first loved us. I John 4:19 NKJV

1. I was a dirty rotten sinner and God found me, and loved me for who I was, just the way I was. He didn't love me for what I could do for Him.
2. He loved me intrinsically for who I am, not what He could get out of the relationship. He wanted to draw close to me.
3. I was a sinner saved by grace, He knew everything about me, and He loved me anyway. He rescued me, He saved me. His unconditional love has transformed me into a person that is so grateful to God, that I want to please and obey Him.
4. I am obedient because I have a hope and a certainty that I am accepted and loved by God. Understanding who I am in Christ has totally changed my life.
5. Because I have experienced His unconditional love & His amazing grace my life has been changed. So, I serve Him, love Him, and obey Him, just simply because I am grateful.

Fallen from grace

*You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. **Galatians 5:4 NKJV***

Some people think when you fall back into sin, you are falling from grace. No, that is not true. When you fall into sin, you can fall into grace.

*God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. **Romans 5:20 NLT***

*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: **Romans 5:20 KJV***

Fallen from grace

You fall from grace when you try to justify yourself by keeping the law or trying to be good, or do right. You think you can earn God's acceptance, blessings, answered prayers or reward, by your good, moral and upright living.

The woman that committed adultery and was brought to Jesus, fell into grace.

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said to her, Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more. ***John 8:10-11 NKJV***

Hope

*For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. **Galatians 5:5***
NKJV

- Hope – in Hebrew means certainty. In English it means uncertainty. (Can you make it, “I hope so.”) In Hebrew hope means absolute certainty. The thing we know will happen.
- If you are trying to save yourself, you can never be sure.
- We eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. I am certain, I am going to be righteous.
- In other words, you are believing and hoping for the day when you will see your righteousness as you enter heaven and God’s glory will be on full display.
- Righteousness in this context means the beauty of God or the acceptance of God.
- Christian’s should be absolutely certain about the glory, beauty and the righteousness of God that will come in the future.

Certainty

- Hope and not fear, it is a new and different motivation. We are not afraid God will reject us and cast us away, but instead we have a great hope and certainty that He will not.
- Are you afraid of being cast into outer darkness because of your immoral living?
- Your motivation should be hope and not fear.
- When you fail, when you blow it, when you sin, the devil says, you call your self a Christian, it doesn't change one thing. I am still fit for His presence. I am still who I am in Christ. I hope in His righteousness.
- God doesn't love me because I did good, I did good because he loves me.
- Every day you need to fill your heart with the certainty of who you are in Christ. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. In Christ I am righteous, I am holy, I am complete.
- I am a real beauty in the eyes of God.
- Give God thanks for who you are in Christ, and stop trying to do things to earn His favor.
- God gave His son to you. Only when you recognize that you're a sinner saved by grace, can you begin to start doing things for God just out of gratitude.

Fear

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. ***1 John 4:17-19 NKJV***

- Fear is the opposite of love, not hate.
- To love you must be vulnerable.
- Fear keeps you from being vulnerable.
- Fear of rejection keeps you from loving or giving yourself away.
- Story: when I was 8 years old with the ring.
- To love hard is to have no fear of rejection. To simply give yourself away.

Faith worketh by love

*but faith working through love. **Galatians 5:6 NKJV***

*What is important is faith expressing itself in love. **Galatians 5:6 NLT***

- By faith we are joined to Him, and we are placed in Him.
- We thereby partake of His life, which is a life of love, and that life transforms us.
- We love Him because He first loved us.
- He loved me intrinsically for who I was, not for what I could do for Him.
- The person who lives by faith is internally motivated by the love of God.

Faith working through love

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. ***Galatians 5:6 NKJV***

- It's true that a Christians faith always produces good works, and all the good works it produces are by love.
- The thing everyone of us wants is to be loved for who we are, intrinsically, in ourselves, to have someone consider you a beauty.
- When you find something beautiful you appreciate it for an end in itself, whether it is music, art, or even a person.
- To be appreciated for what I am, not what I can give you.

Faith working through love

- God loves me for who I am, and not for what I can do for Him or what I can give Him.
- He just loves me, the real me.
- He knows everything about me, good and bad, and He loves me anyway. I was ugly (spiritually) and He loved me anyway.
- I am saved by grace, just because God is good and He loves me for who I am, or who I am intrinsically.
- Experiencing God's grace and unconditional love is the motivating power for my walk of faith.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump

*A little leaven leavens the whole lump. **Galatians 5:9 NKJV***

*This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! **Galatians 5:9 NLT***

- Just one small lie, one bit of false doctrine from a false teacher can spread through thousands of people.
- Just a small bit of poison can kill someone.
- A little yeast leavens the whole lump. This false persuasion, the why behind your obedience is wrong, the motive is wrong.
- This teaching is like a cancer, it could spread and destroy the churches.

The offense of the cross

*And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. **Galatians 5:11 NKJV***

- The gospel always starts offensive. If you have never been offended by the gospel or the cross, you probably don't understand it.
- What is the motivation for living a good life?
- The false teachers message looks good on the outside. It is simply be good, be moral, be noble, be generous, give to the poor, judge not, work for world peace, etc...nobody gets offended by that. You are not telling them they are sinners in a hopeless situation, condemned to die and on their way to hell.
- But when you preach the gospel or cross it is offensive on the outside, you are saying that you are so lost, so far from being able to live a good life, that nothing less than the death of the Son of God will save you. That offends people.

You better live right or else

- So, on the outside the false teachers look like they are loving and affirming, but on the inside their motivation is totally negative and fear based. The false teachers say that the reason you have to obey God is because if you don't obey Him, He will get you, God will judge you and reject you. So, you better toe the line or He will cast you away.
- Remember on the outside the gospel is offensive, but on the inside with the gospel the motivation is that God loves you and accepts you and will never reject you, God will never leave you.
- On the inside the false teacher's approach is absolutely fear based and negative and demeaning. You better live up or God will cast you into outer darkness.
- People say all the time, if I believe like you, that once I become a Christian, I would never be afraid of being rejected by God, no matter how I live, I would have no incentive to live a good life.
- No, it works the opposite, understanding I am accepted by God and knowing He will never leave me nor forsake me, understanding that He loves me for who I am and not what I can do for Him, motivates me to a life a holiness and love.

Faith working through love

- If you think you are going to heaven because you live a good life then every good thing you are doing is not for God but is for you. You are using God.
- Again, if you help the little ole-lady get across the street, you are saying I need to do this good deed so God will bless me, you are not loving her for who she is, or you are not doing it for God, you are doing it for yourself. You are using her.
- Jesus loves us for who we are in ourselves. He loves us intrinsically.
- Until you see You are saved by grace not works, you are using God.
- I will obey but why doesn't God answer my prayers? Why doesn't He bless me? You are obeying because you want your prayers answered. You are using God. You are not obeying Him for who He is, you are trying to use Him.
- Faith working through love, nothing else counts.

Summary

- Our motivation matters. It matters why we obey God.
- We don't obey to earn God's favor or acceptance or to be rewarded.
- Doing good works to try to get God's blessings is trying to use God.
- Serving God because you are afraid of Him rejecting you or casting you away is rooted in fear, which is the opposite of love.
- We obey God because He has loved us just the way we are. I was a dirty, rebellious, sinner and He came to me and saved me and drew me close to Himself. He loved me just the way I was.
- He loves me for who I am and not for what I can do for Him.
- I am grateful to Him, so grateful that I have given my life to Him. He now owns me and can use me to do anything He wants.
- God doesn't love me because I do good, I do good because God loves me.
- And my hope is in Him, I am certain of it, I am who He says I am "in Christ." I am accepted by God not because of what I do, but because of what Jesus did.