

Galatians 4:12-16 – Listen to God’s Servant!

TSK, GreekLexicon, Gaebelein, Handfuls, Rienecker, Geneva, Trapp, Robertson, Bezuyen, Poole, Henry, JFB, Clarke, Abbot, Calvin, Lightfoot?

Beloved in the Lord Jesus: **A faithful child of God listens to solid Gospel pastors and embraces the full Gospel he hears from them!**

He is not bothered if his preacher stutters, is a little inarticulate, or if he is a little boring. **The faithful child of God knows truth and loves truth.**

But there are times when the new “shiny thing” appears and it can pull that faithful child of God away from him.

So when Harvest-style Churches, for example, started popping up in the 1990’s with their light teaching and a focus on relationships and being “lovey-dovey,” some ran to them. These pastors were often more like psychologists and fed people what they wanted. (The key phrase was meeting the “felt needs” of the people).

Even some Reformed believers were drawn to those churches. With weakened doctrines and lacking discipline, those believers became weak.

Yes, those churches grew quickly and it appeared there was a revival, but those preachers were treating God with contempt, they were harming his bride, and they were dishonoring the Bridegroom!

This was similar to what happened in Galatia. You will hear about this today.

Our headings are:

God’s Servants Reminded of the Truth (The Truth which)

God’s Servants Received

God’s Servants Rejected

Our goals are: **That you will train your ears to discern God’s Gospel truth, receive and believe it, and reject those who proclaim any other Gospel than that which is in Holy Writ.**

God’s Servant Reminded of truth

12 **Brethren**, I urge you to **become like me**, for **I became like you**. You have **not injured me at all**.

1. Apostle Paul did not just write to the Galatians as a theologian; you see him here as a pastor and a brother.

He addressed them personally, as “his brothers.”

He could have used stronger words only. (He told them they were bewitched!)
But he wanted to remind them that **even though they had fallen into sin, there was a way out of sin.** There always is!

His goal was to win them back to the Savior – not to give them what they deserved!
What a wise pastor!!!

2. Apostle Paul then urged the Galatians to become like he was...living in freedom from works of the law.

He was not teaching them to imitate his moral character as if he were superior to them. Remember Romans 7! He couldn't help but sin!

Rather, he was telling them to believe as he believed: that one was saved by grace through faith in Christ alone and one was not saved by ritual obedience -using religious elements.

3. Apostle Paul had become like they were...down to their level...socially...in order to preach the Gospel to them.

To the Jew, he was a Jew. To the Celts, he was a Celt.

1Corinthians 9:20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; 22 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.

He wanted the Christians there to become like he was after their conversion...as he had become like they were before conversion. He said this to win them not only with the doctrine he spoke, but also to win them with kindness.

4. Apostle Paul said he was not injured by the Galatians at all, meaning that though he was hurt by their rejection of the doctrines he taught, he had forgiven them and would not hold that against them.

5. Lessons:

a. Listen to preachers who are theologically sound but also present kind encouragements and warnings to believers to live to please the Master. Those who are theological but not applicatory are not helpful to Christ's cause. Those who

are only applicatory without the theological basis, are not helpful to the cause of Christ.

b. When you win people to Christ, you should desire that they believe like you believe! It is not just coming to know Christ; it is knowing how to live as a Christian. Are you willing to do that? Do you know doctrines so you can teach them?

c. Be ready to forgive those who may have rejected the truths you taught them, if they ask.

Even if they don't ask for forgiveness, don't hold on to hurts. If you hold on to hurts you will become angry and bitter and that won't honor Christ.

d. Be ready to use kind words even when teaching. You go much further when you call someone "brother" than "you."

God's Servants Received

13 You know that because of **physical infirmity** I preached the gospel to you at the first. 14 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.

1. Apostle Paul had preached to the Galatians the Gospel of Jesus Christ, having to stop there in his travels because he fell sick.

At this time Malaria was very common for travelers...and so were ugly eye diseases, which many historians believe he had. We don't know for sure, but he had a much-feared, ugly disease at the time.

But when the Galatians saw him, they did not despise his condition and did not reject him.

("Reject" literally means to "spit out.") When one had an ugly sickness, some people would spit on that person or on the ground! Others would have turned up their noses at him and refuse to listen to him.

2. The Galatians received the preaching of this gross-looking man with much grace and compassion.

They could also have justified rejecting Apostle Paul thinking: **"You are a man of God and have to deal with such a horrible sickness? What kind of God are you serving?"**

But they didn't.

3. In fact, the Galatians received him as an angel of God...even as Christ himself.

Malachi 2:7 "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; **For he is the messenger [angel] of the LORD of hosts.**

And they were right – even to receive Apostle Paul as Christ himself. That’s what Jesus said.

Matthew 10:40 "He who receives you receives Me, and **he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.**

4. Lessons:

a. Christians are not immune from physical and mental sickness. They can be caused by sin, or they can be part of God’s refining power on his people...causing them to become more dependent on him.

b. There aren’t apostles today, but you are to, just as the Galatians, receive the Word of Truth when it is proclaimed by faithful ministers, and receive it with fear and joy!

Luke 10:16 "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

c. Never decide whether to reject or believe a minister by virtue of his outward appearance, his accent, his degrees, or his winsomeness! Receive him when he speaks in concord with the Word of God.

God’s Servants Rejected

15 **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.

1. Apostle Paul said it almost seemed like they never really enjoyed the blessings they actually received.

2. But Apostle knew they had received the Gospel and the consequent blessing of salvation and showed it!

How did they show it? **They were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to him** if he asked for them! They couldn’t do enough to show their gratitude for the Gospel they heard from Apostle Paul. And surely the world saw the blessing of salvation too! They loved God and men.

16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

3. Apostle Paul then questioned whether he had become their enemy for some reason.

It is likely to the Galatians Apostle Paul was stale. He was the old-fashioned way.

They needed something new – like the Harvest-type Churches...that put a little more emphasis on the work of man and feeling good about oneself! That's how the Jews had seen John the Baptist – until they lost interest:

John 5:35 "He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.

4. Lessons:

a. As strong and true as you may be as a believer, you can fall into great deception as the Galatians had. So don't become arrogant, but daily nourish yourself with the truth of God's Word, preached by faithful men, so you stay strong and not be blown around by every wind of doctrine.

Psalms 141:5 Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. **And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil**; Let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked.

b. It is often said the one who speaks the truth never gets rich. There is a large measure of truth to this saying, even in the church. It is risky business to speak the truth because someone may be hurt by it. But that's what God has called his ministers to do.

Ephesians 4:15 but, **speaking the truth in love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ...

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. **Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

c. As an elder or minister, you are *not* to stop speaking God's truth even if people don't like it. You are a servant of God first before you are a servant of God's people. Do it in love. Speaking truth is never a sign of hate. So do it!

d. Don't get angry when your children get angry when you teach them the truth. Your children are not hating you. They are hating the message because it limits them. They are really angry with God.
Pray for them instead.

e. How sad it was to hear the words of Christ and try to shut his lips. Love the preacher. Listen to him.

Conclusion:

The Galatians looked to and listen to the Apostle Paul even with his vile sickness. They believed what he said. And they knew he was a servant of the true and living God. But the new shiny Gospel came and they soon brushed him aside for the newer doctrines. Apostle Paul then called them back to what they first believed (and you can say it): Salvation was by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord:

1. Don't allow yourself to be lured away by the newest shiny preacher and the newest shiny doctrines that come your way.

Remember the pure, full Gospel you had when you believed and hold on dearly to it. You can't go wrong doing that.

2. Daily increase that knowledge by diving regularly into the Word of Truth.

(Join the Bible reading group!)

You will mature and get stronger and stronger and won't easily be blown by every new wind of doctrine.

3. Disperse this same Gospel with the world.

The world is still trying to save itself by good works or at least help save itself with good works in some kind of weird corporation with God.

Expose that weakness and point the world to Christ.

Spread the Word from any home so its aroma can be felt and enjoyed through out the community.

Finally, today as God's servant I tell you to **ask God for the rich salvation he offers in Jesus Christ.**

Don't spend another day in abject poverty.

Don't try to earn your salvation.

Don't try to help earn your salvation.

You can't!

Receive salvation for free if you simply ask God for it.