

**Message #14****Galatians 4:8-20**

One of the tragic things that most all of us have faced is the tragedy of watching someone we love suffer from Alzheimer's or dementia. Frankly, the best person to talk to about this is Becky Davis, who has her Ph.D. in this field. As I understand it at a layman's level, Alzheimer's is a disease in which the brain actually deteriorates and dementia is a series of symptoms that cause memory loss. Talk with Becky and she can give you an accurate perspective of this.

Now one of the things that Alzheimer's does is that it mysteriously attacks the central nervous system to the point that a person becomes confused and emotionally unstable. The mental deterioration can progress to a level where the individual no longer recognizes reality and no longer knows those of his or her own family. This is one of the most tragic things you can ever see.

In the church there is actually a spiritual form of this that is demonic, disastrous and tragic. Someone will come into the church and trust Jesus Christ as Savior. Things seem to be developing nicely and then the person starts to regress in their spirituality. It is almost like they no longer know or care about those who were instrumental in them coming to faith in Jesus Christ. They drift so far away in their brains that it is almost as if they can no longer recognize truth. I have seen this happen to a few people in every church I have been in.

This problem is not new to our age. The apostle Paul saw the very same problem happening in the churches of Galatia. He had been instrumental in sharing the grace Gospel with them, but others were creeping into the churches that were attacking Paul and the wonderful doctrine of pure grace. The tragedy was that the people were losing their loyalty to Paul and they started to become very confused and unstable. It was almost as if their memories were suffering some spiritual dementia. Instead of going forward they were going backward. When Paul wrote these verses, what he writes is this:

**GOD'S PEOPLE MUST NOT REGRESS IN THEIR SPIRITUALITY, IN THEIR DOCTRINE OR IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE FAITHFUL MAN OF GOD WHO HAS BEEN USED TO INFLUENCE THEM IN THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD.**

Paul had poured his life into these people and they were falling into some spiritual form of Alzheimer's. They were becoming diseased in their doctrine and they were forgetting about Paul and could not seem to even recognize sound doctrine anymore. This really upset Paul and he took it very personally. In fact, this is probably the most emotional part of the book.

I have told you this story before. There was a missionary from CAM missions who came to our first church wanting support. CAM missions was founded by C. I. Scofield. As we talked he started to speak lightly of C. I. Scofield. I ended up throwing him out of my office. Years ago I spoke with a professor of Dallas Seminary, who spoke somewhat lightly of Dr. Chafer. When I rebuked him for his arrogance and told him I just got off the phone with Dr. Walvoord, who didn't agree with what he just said, he started double-talking.

Loyalty to solid, faithful men of God is being lost today and it was also being lost in Paul's day and that is why he wrote this section of Scripture.

There are two main emotional appeals that Paul makes to the Galatians:

**EMOTIONAL APPEAL #1** – Paul begs the Galatians not to turn away from God's grace to a pursuit of legalistic religion. **4:8-15**

There is nothing more disastrous or depressing than to see Christians spiritually regressing rather than spiritually progressing. That is exactly what these Galatians were doing. They were turning from grace to law. They were abandoning liberty for bondage. They were dropping out of the college of grace and enrolling in the kindergarten of law. They were leaving the mature words of grace and going back under the alphabetical sounds of the Law. Instead of being spiritually mature, they were a bunch of sniveling, whining babes who were regressing in spirituality.

So there are five reminders that Paul gives to these Galatians:

**Reminder #1** - Before you came into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, you were a slave to things other than the true God. **4:8**

Before coming to faith in Jesus Christ, the Galatians were Gentile heathens devoted to the worship of pagan deities, which included various idols and customs. They worshipped things like Zeus or Hermes. Today we call them Buddha or Muhammad. They are all the same; they are nothing. Prior to coming to faith in Christ, these Galatians were steeped in their system of religious works and rituals.

Every false religion out there tells you that you can be right with God by your works. This is true of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Catholicism or Mormonism. For example, Mormonism teaches in their 3<sup>rd</sup> Article of faith "We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved **by obedience to the laws and ordinances...**". In their book II Nephi 25:23 they say, "...it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do."

What this really comes down to is that one does not really and completely trust in Jesus Christ to save from sin; he trust in his works, his testimony, his burning in the bosom to save him.

Now notice what this verse says—false religion that means nothing enslaves people. Works systems of religion dominate people to the point that they are enslaved to it. So whatever a person's god is, they become enslaved to it - 1) Accomplishments; 2) Approval; 3) Autonomy; 4) Addiction; 5) Education; 6) Pleasure; 7) Sex; 8) Success; 9) Wealth; 10) Occupation. **But the worst enslavement of all is works religion.**

**Reminder #2** - After you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, why would you want to go back into some system of religious works? **4:9-10**

Notice the language Paul uses in these verses. He classifies works systems of religion as weak and worthless. It is weak because it is our works and it is worthless because God does not accept it.

We are set free from our sin by faith in Jesus Christ. Religion says you get right with God by some merit works salvation system. But once you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you will sense a new freedom.

So why in the world would any person want to put himself back under some dead religious works system? These Galatians were observing Sabbath days, months and years. They were trying to keep some of the Mosaic Law from the O.T.. They were being lured to observe Sabbath “days,” they were observing festival and feast “seasons” and they were being lured to observe Sabbatical years.”

Dr. G. Walter Hansen said that he visited a theological institution in China and he said as he listened to the teachers, they sounded more Confucian than Christian. I have been in Bible colleges and seminaries where they sound more like Aristotle than the apostles. I have personally been on campuses of theological institutions in which there was more of an arrogant scholasticism than a humble spirituality.

My life dramatically changed after I trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and studied the Bible, not when I was sitting in a college studying psychology.

By the way, do not overlook **verse 9**; the matter of salvation is not just about “you knowing God,” it is about “God knowing you.” This is a key point of theology. The real issue of salvation is whether or not God knows us because we have been clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with our works; it is all about His grace and His Son.

**Reminder #3** - When you move toward some system of works, Paul was afraid that all of his grace work had been in vain. **4:11**

Paul preached pure grace (Acts 13:39). There is absolutely nothing more depressing to a true servant of God than to sit back and think about all of the work, the sacrifices, the time, the energy and the effort that you have poured into people and have it mean nothing. Paul had poured his life into teaching these people God’s grace. Now it was as if it hadn’t meant anything. They were reverting back under the O.T. Law.

I knew a man who poured his life into his job in a very God-honoring way. He never missed work and he worked hard. One day the company said we are shutting your job down and letting you go. It hurt this man deeply. I sat on his porch and he was crying. He had poured years of his life into that company and it was like they forgot about him. That was in the temporal world.

Paul was dealing with eternal things. He had poured his life into teaching them truth about the grace of God and it was as if it did not matter.

We had a very rough ministry in Idaho. There were times when we wondered whether or not it was a big mistake to have even gone there. It was eight grueling years and you begin to think this move was for nothing.

Paul felt the same way about the Galatians. Those people were drifting so far from grace, he was beginning to wonder if they were truly saved. The works that most suggest make you right with God were the very works that caused Paul to question whether they were saved.

**Reminder #4** - Paul begs the Galatians to become as he has become. **4:12**

That word “beg” is a Greek word that means to request something out of deep want and need. If a person asks for a raise, that could be a want; if the person asks for a job, that is a need. Paul uses a word that covers both angles of that.

Paul was a man who had turned his back on rigid legalism and religious laws and he had embraced the grace of God. Paul had died to the Law (Gal. 2:19). Paul saw himself as a sinner saved by grace and he related to these Galatians. He came presenting the pure grace of God and they initially responded and they esteemed Paul for it.

Paul says I beg you to go back to that theological mindset that I have. I am not a person devoted to religion, or tradition or to O.T. Law; I am devoted to pure grace.

**Reminder #5** - Paul reminds the Galatians of their former esteem of him. **4:13-15**

When Paul first went to Galatia, he did not go as some successful, religious entrepreneur. He did not go wearing flashy clothes or with religious pomp or ceremony. When Paul first came to the Galatians, he did not look like some ecclesiastical giant with an impressive entourage. Paul went to Galatia when he was physically sick (**v. 13**).

God used the sickness to get Paul to Galatia to preach the Gospel of grace. Paul did not look strong when he first went there; he looked somewhat repulsive, but the Galatians considered him to be like an angel sent by God (**v. 14**).

Now many students speculate that Paul had malaria. This is based on the fact that you must travel through low swampy areas of Pamphylia to get to Galatia and the fact that there is a reference in **verse 15** to his eyes. Malaria is a disease that includes fever and pain and it also attacks the optic nerve. It can cause color blindness, atrophy (loss of eye strength) and it can cause blindness. It is very possible that this was the disease that brought Paul to Galatia.

The point Paul is making is that I came to you in a sickly state and you did not look down on me; in fact, you responded to the Gospel of grace.

You received me at the highest level and you gave me the ultimate welcome and some considered me to be an angel as like Christ Himself, even though I was sick.

Paul asks in **verse 15** what has happened to you people? Why have you drifted? Where is that devotion you once had for Paul that was so profound that you would have even given up your own eyes for me?

When some religious scatterbrain or malcontent creeps into the church, it can quickly sway people away from loyalty to a true grace teacher who was once loved by the people. It is amazing that some legalistic, religious law promoter can come into a church and quickly move people away from a loyalty to the grace of God and to the man of God that God used to teach them in grace.

That is exactly what happened to the Galatians.

**EMOTIONAL APPEAL #2** – Paul asks the Galatians to listen to the truth. **4:16-20**

There are three key truths that Paul brings out:

**Truth #1** - Paul presents truth concerning himself. **4:16**

Nothing hurts a man of God more than to see someone you care about turn against you. Many love preachers who tell them what they want to hear; but the job of a preacher is to tell the truth of God and sometimes people don't want that or like that. Paul had been honored by these people, but now they were treating him and his teaching as if he were their enemy.

Paul had taught them the great truth about the grace of God. They were free in Christ. He told them that the only way to be justified was by faith in Him and not by any works of the Law. He taught them a pure grace Gospel; grace plus no works, grace plus no law, grace plus nothing. Now the people who have once honored him were turning against him.

J. Vernon McGee told the story of a time he was going to do a prophecy conference and he said to an old man, "I will probably make a few enemies by a course on prophecy." The old man said "No you won't make enemies by teaching on prophecy, many people will come. You will make enemies when you preach pure grace."

**Truth #2** - Paul presents truth concerning enemies. **4:17**

Enemies of God's grace are zealous. They will do their best to try to get you to follow them. They will do whatever it takes to get people over to their system of religion. They will pursue them "eagerly." As Jesus said these religious people will travel on sea and land to make one proselyte for hell (Matthew 23:15).

These kinds of people appear to be so interested in you and your welfare. What they are not interested in is you actually knowing truth so that you may cultivate a real relationship with God. They have their own agenda and most likely at the heart of their agenda is your money. They will seek out people in an attempt to shut you out of the grace of God.

**Truth #3** - Paul presents truth concerning his perplexity. **4:18-20**

Paul was perplexed. He said don't you know I care about you? Paul says why do you think I am laboring to write you this letter? It is because I care. I want Christ formed in you. This was what caused Paul to labor. He wanted Jesus Christ formed in people, not the O.T. Law.

Paul says I wish I could be there so that I could change my perspective of you. But the fact that you are going back under the O.T. Law is perplexing to me.

These Galatians were very confused.