

Gal 4:10,11+19,20 PAUL and the GALATIANS

PRELIMS. Paul is here very concerned about the **spiritual condition** of the Galatian Church. In fact, he is so concerned, that he is now concerned about their **spiritual standing/status!** Are they “**in Christ**” at all? “*I am **afraid** I may have laboured over you in **vain***”[11] “*I am **perplexed about** you*”[20]

Paul is wondering, did he make a mistake regarding their faith. Paul reminds them of the **love** they had for him when they first met and also the **love** they had for **Christ**. “*What then has become of the **blessing** you felt?*”[15a] He **appeals** to the **enthusiasm** they exhibited when they first met Paul and heard the gospel “*you received me as an **angel of God, as Christ Jesus...for I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me***” [15] What’s happened since then? Well, this is what happened....

Visitors, claiming to be Xn teachers, came to Galatia and taught something **different** from what Paul taught. And it sounded good! It made sense! But it **was different** from what Paul had taught them! And it was different in the **basic** point of Xnity! On the **foundation** of the faith. The foundation is **Christ!** If Jesus Christ, Son of God, who **died** and rose again physically from the dead is not at the **root** of your faith, it is **not** Xnity! It is not the faith of the Apostle Paul.

It is one thing to be ‘in Christ and have Christ’, to be converted and full of **fire** and **enthusiasm** and then to have that fire and enthusiasm **dampened!** That happens a lot. But it is **another** thing completely not to have Christ but to be **intellectually stimulated** by the theology in the gospel! The gospel is a most interesting philosophy and ‘attracts’ many intellectually minded people who do not know Christ as their Lord and Saviour but are fascinated and even stimulated by the logic of Xnity!

A true Xn **can lose** his fire/enthusiasm and still have his feet

firmly planted on the Rock Christ Jesus. I knew of a preacher like that (Ian Nicholson) and Nicky Gumble tells of those who lost their zeal after being in Theological Seminary! All the study drained the passion out of them!

A person can also be firmly on the Rock Christ Jesus and be **led astray** regarding ‘secondary’ matters, and still have zeal for the heart of the gospel. That person knows whom he has believed and he cannot be led astray regarding the **foundation** of his faith – for his whole **trust/hope/confidence** is in the **death** and **resurrection** of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul was **unsure** it seems, into which category the Gals fell. Were they on the Rock? Were they like the seed which fell on rocky ground and “*since it had **no root**, it withered away*”? [Mar 4:6] he’s worried! So, what **triggered off** Paul’s concern?

It was **not** that they had sinned – for **every single Xn** sins! It was not that they had **some** things wrong about the faith – for no Xn has every single thing right about the faith. It was this: no **spiritual growth**! Christ was **not “formed”** in them!

You see, the Xn life is like natural life – there is the seed and then growth, there is maturity, there is development. “*the kingdom of God...**first** the blade, **then** the ear, **then** the full grain in the ear*” [Mar 4:28] We start off as “***babes in Christ***”! But if there is no maturity, we must ask questions. Hebrews:- “*by **this time** you **ought** to be teachers*” but continues the Writer “***you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God***” [Heb 5:12] Peter informs us that “*everyone who lives on **milk** is unskilled in the word... since he is a **child***” [1 Pet 2:2] *The **nature** of **faith** is such that through various means, the real seed **will grow**!

So that is where Paul is: things were so bad that Paul felt he had to **begin again** at the **basics** and go through the pain of spiritual “*childbirth **until** Christ is **formed** in you*” [19]. Now, as a real

parent he wants to be **present with them**, for letter-writing is **not** as **good** at communicating as **personal contact** is!

It did not convey the **warmth/love** that was vital for this important subject. Being **absent**, meant Paul had to be **firmer** with them “*I wish I could be **present** with you now and **change** my **tone**, for I am perplexed about you*”[20] Meeting people **face to face** was far more likely to convey the **importance** and the necessary ‘**warmth** and **love**’ in speaking about such serious matters. Personal contact makes a **greater impression!** You can say things, and ‘touch hearts’ while sipping coffee, at a Bible study, that you can’t do when writing a book.

Of course it is **only** the Holy Spirit that does it in **any** and **every** situation, but it is more **congenial** to meet in a non-formal setting, and more **conducive** to success. When God wanted to convey the most important message in all the world, to the world – He sent His Son to do it!! Man to man, eyeball to eyeball. Baxter ‘a dying man to dying men’!

So, as we said, the problem Paul saw was Christ was **not formed** in them. There was no development or growth. Xn is a **process**. Whatever happened at Paul’s first meeting with them, **should** have by now **resulted** in a **mature faith!**

They did **not** ‘**move on**’! “*let us **leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity***” [Heb 6:1] **APP** Well, how do **you** think **you** are doing regarding spiritual maturity? What progress since 5yrs ago? How many sins have you conquered?

What do you now **think** of? “*Brothers, do **not be children in your thinking**. Be infants in evil, but in your **thinking be mature***” [1Cor 14:20] What is Paul saying here? He is saying **meditate**, think about what you read and hear! Don’t worry about being infants in wickedness! But **think through** the meaning and the significance and the consequences of what you read and hear. Don’t swallow everything you read/hear –

even from **university graduates** and **professors!** God's Word is the **only** Word you can trust. "***Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge'***" [1T6]

It is **vital** that **young Xns** are **fed** good wholesome spiritual 'food' "***solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice***" [He 5:14]

It is vital for young Xns to have the **constant practice** of reading and thinking about God. **Jonathan Edwards** 'saw' God in everything created. The light that came in at the window in the morning "refreshed my soul...seemed to be some image of the light of God's glory". 'Edwards believed that virtually everything in natural realm was an image or shadow of some Divine reality or truth "the end of creation was God's communicating of Himself – and thereby of glory – to the understanding and will of His creatures". 'There was hardly any colour or shape or process or movement in nature that didn't in some way embody and express a spiritual truth.'

It is vital that we **feed on God's Word!** Do you know your Bible? Peter tells us that if we are **not skillful** in **handling the Word**, we are still **children!** "*everyone who lives on milk is **unskilled** in the word... since he is a child*" [1 Pet 2:2] **It is vital that we **listen to teaching** of God's Word. Paul told the elders at Ephesus what would **build them up!** "*And now I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is **able to build you up***" Paul wrote "*Him we **proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ***" [Col 1:28] Do you listen to mp3 sermons? In the car? At Home? On holiday? **By **prayer** "*beloved, **build** yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit*" [Jude 20] **Keep **thinking** of God's **love & mercy** "*keep yourselves in the love of God...waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*" [Jude 21] ****encourage** one another, not about ourselves, but about God's **grace** "*Therefore **encourage** one another and **build** one another up*" [1 The 5:11]