



GALATIANS

VERSE-BY-VERSE



SESSION 12 | GALATIANS 4:8-20

GALATIANS 4:8-11 | PAUL'S CONCERN FOR JUDAIZED GALATIANS

- Verses 8-9 –
 - The plural pronoun has been made clear in verse 1 and the identity as Galatians has not changed since then.
 - There was a time with the Galatians **knew not God** but served false gods, **which by nature are no gods**.
 - However, after coming to know God they know turn back to **weak and beggarly elements** and desire to come back into **bondage** of such elements.
 - The **weak and beggarly elements** may have changed from their pagan variety to now a Jewish variety, but it doesn't matter which variety you choose, they are still elements of bondage.
 - Paul says that now they have come to know God, but clarifies, **rather are known of God**. Does this testify to Calvinism? It certainly would be one of the passages upon which Calvinism rests its theology. However, one must consider what options are available, and which of all the options best fits the total counsel of Scripture. In addition to the Calvinist option, these options include:
 - God was previously unaware that the Galatians existed. This option can be summarily dismissed based on our knowledge of God through Scripture.
 - The plan of God did not previously include the Galatians, but now does. This aligns with Paul's teaching.
 - Note that the Greek word underlying **known** is γινώσκω [ginosko], which is a "personal experience" kind of knowledge, not an intellectual knowledge.
- Verses 10-11 -
 - The previously mentioned **weak and beggarly elements** are now specified, using the example of the observation of **days, and months, and times, and years**.
 - This is a reference to the Jewish calendar, no doubt, with the possibility of some of the pagan elements of their previous religion.
 - Note that Paul now mentions more than circumcision, and here mentions that which is more subtle and introductory to Judaism.
 - The Judaizers do not come to introduce their heresy immediately with the requirement circumcision, but such is the natural conclusion.
 - Beware of the small things you adopt into the faith.
 - Paul says **I am afraid of you**, not *for you*. What the Galatians had become was fearful for Paul, who feared he has worked **in vain**.

GALATIANS 4:12-20 | PAUL PLEADS WITH THE GALATIANS

- Verse 12 –
 - Paul asks the Galatians to toward a unity, offering forgiveness by letting the Galatians know that **ye have not injured me at all**. That is, "we can still be together, there is nothing that has taken place that cannot be fixed."
- Verses 13-14 –

- There was some kind of **infirmity of the flesh** during Paul's first missionary journey that was at least one of the reasons he **preached the Gospel** in Galatia.
- We are not told about this affliction in the book of Acts.
- This **infirmity** was a *trial* (translated as **temptation**) for Paul. Note it is **my temptation** (though the modern versions change to "trial to you" or similar).
- Since Paul says that his **infirmity of the flesh** was **my temptation**, we are led to 2 Corinthians 12:7 and Paul's **thorn in the flesh** that was given as a *trial* for *Paul* (not for the Galatians) and can speculate that this is the reference point.
- Since Paul says that the thorn was **the messenger of Satan**, he here commends the Galatians for receiving him **as an angel of God**. Note that the word **messenger** and **angel** are the same Greek word.
- Verse 15 –
 - Paul asks **where is then the blessedness ye spake of**.
 - While only the word *of* is italicized, the word **spake** is not found in the original, per se.
 - However, the word μακαρισμός [makarismos] is a *spoken blessing* by definition, so it would have been inaccurate to say "what then has become of your blessedness" (as ESV). The word involves the *speaking of a blessing* rather than being *in a blessed state*.
 - Romans 4:6 and 9 contain the only other uses of the word, and the verses speak of the blessing God places upon those who receive righteousness without works.
 - Knowing the definition of this word affects the meaning of the verse.
 - Paul is not asking, "where has your happiness gone?" but he is asking, "where has your blessing which you once poured upon me gone?"
 - Correct translation makes the second part of the verse to make sense: *the Galatians would have done anything for Paul*.
 - Was Paul blind or had difficulty of sight? It is possible, both by this reference to eyes and by his signature of large letters in Galatians 6:11 (where KJV has singular letter, which we will discuss when we get there. Furthermore, the usage of large letters personally written was not uncommon to documents of the day, so this reference may be meaningless). While it is possible, there is no further indication in scripture that Paul suffers from vision problems, and his breadth of travel and experience would not indicate such.
- Verse 16 –
 - The Galatians used to speak blessings on Paul and make great personal sacrifice. Now that Paul speaks the truth, it appears that he has become the **enemy**.
 - This is a reminder that one must be diligent to receive the truth in grace. Truth-tellers are not the enemy.
- Verse 17 –
 - Speaking of the Judaizers (i.e.: **they**) have a zeal for the Galatians, but not a good one. Their zeal is that **they would exclude** the Galatians (i.e.: **you**) from Paul in order that the Galatian zeal would be for the Judaizers.
- Verse 18 –
 - Being careful to note that he is not writing out of jealousy, Paul notes that he applauds any zeal **in a good thing**, even when Paul is absent (that is, even if it for someone else). The word **good** is καλός [kalos], which is used with the negative in verse 17, translated **not well**.
 - Beware of one who is zealous that you be zealous for them, rather than for the truth.
- Verses 19-20 –
 - Paul speaks figuratively when he compares his pain for the Galatians to the pain of childbirth. His desire: that **Christ be formed in you** and **to be present with you** and **to change my voice**, being able to speak confidence rather than **doubt of you**.