

**Ga 4:12–20 (ESV)** Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. <sup>(13)</sup> You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, <sup>(14)</sup> and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. <sup>(15)</sup> What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>(16)</sup> Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? <sup>(17)</sup> They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. <sup>(18)</sup> It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, <sup>(19)</sup> my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! <sup>(20)</sup> I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

## 1. Background

- A. False teachers had come in teaching a gospel of works that cannot save a man
  - 1). The Galatians were listening to them – being brought back under bondage to the law
  - 2). In this letter Paul tackles this problem – boldly, fearlessly, aggressively
- B. But Paul wants them to understand why he is being so aggressive
  - 1). He's not just being mean – He is so aggressive because He loves them
  - 2). In this section he assures them of his love – calling them “Brothers” “My little children”
- C. There are also a lot of lessons for those in ministry here

**Transition:** In Paul's writings he seems to have 3 problems he had to deal with

- A. Three common misunderstandings many ministers can relate too

## 2. Three common misunderstandings about Paul

**First:** He was criticized for being a hypocrite

**2 Cor 10:9-10 (NIV)** I do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. (10) For some say, *“His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.”*

- A. He's not really what he appears in his letters – “His words don't match his life”
- B. Every minister faces this eventually from a disgruntled parishioner
  - 1). Hard to live life in front of everybody – we all make mistakes – the ministers is magnified
    - a). Unfortunately there is always somebody ready to pounce

**Second:** He was criticized over issues of authority

- A. He doesn't really have the authority he claims to have – he's not really an Apostle
- B. You see Paul dealing with this again and again in his letters
 

Writing to prove He was an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father
- C. This is nothing new – every leader eventually deals with people who question their authority
 

**Num 16:3 (NIV)** They came as a group *to oppose Moses and Aaron* and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. *Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?"*

  - 1). Who do you think you are leading this thing – we're holy too!
    - a). While that may be true God does appoint certain men to lead – be chaos if He didn't

**Third:** He was criticized for not being a warm and loving Pastor

- A. He is intellectual, cold, dogmatic, theological, severe, intimidating.... BUT not warm! Not loving!
  - 1). Probably some who read this letter – after first 3 chapters
 

“Here we go again...same old Paul – Mr. tough guy, cranky, unloving, lacking a Pastor's heart”
- B. This is the issue we see Paul dealing with in the passage before us
  - 1). In chapters 1-3 we heard from Paul the Apostle, theologian, defender of the faith
  - 2). Now we hear from Paul the Pastor – who deeply loves these Galatians

**Thought:** Many Pastors go through these same exact things

- A. Seems no matter what they do or say it's always wrong to somebody
  - 1). Don't confront sin in an individual in the church = soft  
Confront it and = unloving
- B. There are always those who think a different Pastor would be better – grass is always greener
- C. If you want to get rid of your Pastor – I want to help – here are some clever ways
  - Look him straight in the eye while he's preaching and say "amen" once in a while and he'll preach himself to death in a few weeks.
  - Build him up and encourage him on his good points and he'll probably work himself to death by the end of the year.
  - Dedicate your life to Christ & ask the preacher to give you a job to do - he'll probably die immediately of heart failure
  - Start a chain letter to send around to the churches. Send a copy of that letter to six other churches that are tired of their pastors. Then bundle up your Pastor and send him to the church at the bottom of the list. In one week you'll receive 16,436 ministers and one of them should be a dandy. But beware one church broke the chain and got their old minister back.

**Transition:** Paul lived constantly under the strain of criticism by people

- A. Here we will deal with the complaint that he was cold and heartless
  - 1). Here we see the Pastoral heart of Paul emerge

## I. PAUL'S APPEAL

**Ga 4:12 (ESV)** Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.

### 1. He's going back to early days he ministered to the Galatians

"When I was with you I adapted my life to fit yours - I became like you - now it's your turn to become like me"

#### Become as I Am...

### 1. Become like him in his relationship to Christ

- A. In the context of them turning to legalism we can assume this means this
  - 1). He longed for them to become like him in his Christian faith and life
    - a). To be delivered from legalism and walk in the freedom of grace  
Resting in the finished work of Christ

#### For I Have Also Become as You Are...

### 1. When Paul went to Galatian he fit in – he adjusted

- A. He was a Jew but he didn't try to force them to become Jews – He became like them
  - 1). He ate their food – got acquainted with their interests – cultural traditions etc.
- B. He tells us why he did this in 1 Cor 9:22-23
  - 1 Co 9:22–23 (ESV)** ... I have become all things to all people, *that by all means I might save some.* <sup>(23)</sup> *I do it all for the sake of the gospel,* that I may share with them in its blessings.
  - 1). He didn't make issues out of non-issues – like food etc. – he joined with them

**Thought:** This is a principle every missionary or evangelist must keep in mind

- A. We want to make others *be like us* as far as faith in Jesus goes
  - 1). But the path we take to get there may include us *becoming like them*

- a). Not in sin – but trying to understand what interests them – their culture
- 2). Ex. England – I purposefully learned as much as I could about football  
Why? So I could converse with the average man! I asked question after question
- B. So Paul said “I became like you – to open doors – so you could become like me and meet my Jesus  
**Transition:** Paul now turns his attention towards attitudes
- A. The Galatians attitude towards Him
- B. The attitudes of the false teachers towards the Galatians – why they were teaching what they taught
- C. Then his attitude towards the Galatians

## II. THE GALATIANS PAST ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAUL

**Ga 4:12 (ESV)** ... You did me no wrong.

### 1. He has wonderful memories of those early days he spent with the Galatians

“I can’t recall one bad memory... the way you treated me when I was with you was wonderful!”

**Transition:** He now jogs their memory – how they acted towards him in those early days

- A. I think he is trying to show them how much they had changed – the fruit of the false teaching

### 2. He reminds them that he came to them in illness (he was sick)

**Ga 4:13 (ESV)** You know it was because of a *bodily ailment* that I preached the gospel to you at first,

- A. Some believe he suffered from an eye disease – some believe it was malaria
  - 1). Whatever it was we can assume it was horrendous – with unpleasant and unsightly symptoms
- B. V. 14 indicates that this illness meant some difficulty for the Galatians in caring for him

**Ga 4:14 (ESV)** and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me...

**(NASB)** ...despise or loathe...

- 1). Because of his sickness and the way he looked – plus the care he took  
The temptation was to despise and loathe him
- 2). But look at how they treated him

**Ga 4:14 (ESV)** and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, *but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.*

- a). They received him as God’s own messenger

As a personal delegate from Christ – sent to bring His message to them

**Transition:** Before we move on I think we need to use this opportunity to teach on the Christian and sickness

- A. We have a teaching today that Christians don’t get sick – how do we explain these verses

### The Christian and Sickness

- A. Does the Bible ever teach that a believer will never be sick?
  - 1). Timothy was sick  
**1 Tim 5:23 (NIV)** Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and *your frequent illnesses.*
  - a). Paul just tell him to bind that sickness – to claim he’s well – don’t you know this stuff?
  - 2). V. 13 Paul was sick
    - a). How do you have a teaching that no Christian ever gets sick  
When you have a pastor and an apostle sick on the pages of Scripture
- B. Notice: God didn’t heal Paul’s sickness He used it to advance His purposes  
**Ga 4:13 (ESV)** You know it was *because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you* at first,

- 1). This whole region heard the gospel for the first time because of that sickness
- 2). God used it for their eternal benefit and His eternal purposes

**Thought:** In this verse we see the value of God bringing weakness into our life

- A. Many times His wonderful purposes run right through our weaknesses
- B. Many times the good of “all things work for our good” run through sickness – trouble

**2 Cor 1:8-9 (NLT)** I think you ought to know, dear friends, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it. (9) In fact, we expected to die. *But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God who can raise the dead.*

- 1). If we would have remained strong – trouble free – that would have been the worst thing for us
  - a). Because God allowed all these things that crushed and overwhelmed us  
We were forced to learn the vital lesson of depending upon Him and His strength rather than our own – we ended up being stronger

- C. Paul learned to embrace those things that weakened him – turn 2 Cor. 12

- 1). He says he was “tormented by a trial”  
Pleads with God 3 times to remove it – probably threw in a “If you love me you’d...”
  - a). We all love the comfort zone  
We embrace trials with thanksgiving only when we are convinced of their value
- 2). God’s answer is very instructive – He says “No” – but then gives the reason – the value  
**2 Co 12:9 (ESV)** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, *for my power is made perfect in weakness.*”
  - a). Paul you need to understand – you are actually stronger when you feel the weakest
  - b). Why? Because it forces you to depend upon me and my grace

**Thought:** This is why God allows us to go through things that overwhelm us – beyond us

- 1). To force us to lift our eyes – to find a strength that is greater than our own – grace that is sufficient
- 2). Paul understood the lesson

**2 Co 12:9–10 (ESV)** But he said to me, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” Therefore **(because of that)** I will *boast all the more gladly* of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>(10)</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with **(I delight in)** weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- a). He delighted in all the things we hate: weakness, insults, hardships, calamities
    - 1a). How? Because he understood the power contained in those things  
They are part of a very rare group that can actually lift our eyes from self
  - b). So Paul says when that is happening in my life – I’ve learned to be content  
For I know that the temporal pain will have a massive effect that will work for my good
  - c). *I’ve learned these are servants sent from my loving Father  
To strip away all those things that are hindering me from real joy in Him*
- 3). This is such growth when we learn to embrace these things
    - a). When we learn to thank Him for those things that weaken us  
Because we’ve learned these things take us to where we want to be
      - 1a). They drive us closer to Him – and there is where we really become strong
  - 4). Because of this – when I think Biblically – I can thank Him for all things  
**1 Th 5:18 (ESV)** give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
    - a). Because I know He is in control of all things

- b). And I know He has promised me that all things will work for my good
  - 1a). So I can assume that all things that come into my life is for my good
    - If it wasn't He wouldn't allow it in – so thank you!

**Transition:** So Paul takes them back to the start of their relationship – reminding them of how good it was

- A. Now he shows them how radically it had changed

**Ga 4:15 (ESV)** What then has become of your blessedness? (What happened to your joy?)

### 1. Legalism had stolen their joy

- A. The fruit of legalism is being hyper-critical – unloving – looked like you sucked on a lemon
- B. He says remember how you used to be – how you used to treat me?

**Ga 4:15 (ESV)** What then has become of your blessedness? *For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.*

- 1). You welcomed me as Christ's messenger and you acted like Christ's people – so giving
  - a). You would have sacrificed your own sight to help me if you could

**Transition:** They'd been so honored to have Paul as their guest – he was so touched by their welcome

- A. But look at the next verse – his heart is breaking

**Ga 4:16 (ESV)** Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

### 1. Received as an angel – now rejected simply because he told the truth

- A. Ever experience this? Been rejected by somebody you thought was a friend – because you told the truth
  - 1). You see a friend doing something that will end up destroying them – some kind of sin
    - You lovingly – gently try to speak to them about it – the relationship ends!

**Thought:** If you've rejected a friend because they told you the truth – rethink that

- A. Value that true friend – that one who will love you enough to take that chance

**Pro 27:6 (NKJV)** *Faithful are the wounds of a friend,* But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

- 1). Praise God for people who love you enough to confront you – don't get all defensive

**Transition:** So this can happen with friends – but it seems to have happened to Paul with a whole church

### 2. Seems Paul had told them some painful truths

- A. Because he loved them – he wanted to steer them away from destroying themselves
- B. Like so many– their enthusiasm for a Pastor can dry up when he hits to close to home
  - 1). But the minister who is of any value in the kingdom won't let that stop them
    - They understand that true love is willing to be vulnerable – willing to confront – willing to be hurt
  - 2). He understands that his people need to hear the hard parts of the Word as well as the easy
    - a). The convicting scriptures must be taught as well as the comforting – all God's counsel

**Point:** This was Paul and like so many who have followed after him – the people didn't want to hear it

- A. This is especially true today isn't it?

**2 Ti 4:3 (ESV)** For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

- 1). I always liked those teachers who got right in my face – I KNOW I NEED IT!
  - a). I want my flesh to be confronted don't you?

**Transition:** We've seen the Galatians attitude towards Paul – started great but had soured

- A. Now Paul points out the attitude or motives of the false teachers

### III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE FALSE TEACHERS

**Ga 4:17 (ESV)** They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

#### 1. Here's their motive – they want to win you over to build themselves up

- A. They feign over you – flatter you – not for your good
  - 1). They just want to gain a following – you are nothing but a boost to their ego!
- B. Watch for leaders who slobber all over you – but never tell you hard things...
  - 1). Jesus wasn't like that – Paul wasn't like that – you cannot really love and be only like that
  - 2). I'm glad you're here – but if it takes watering down truth to keep you here – No thanks!

**Ga 4:18 (ESV)** It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

- A. It's nice to be zealously sought after – if the purpose is good
  - 1). If that teacher is trying to point you to Christ and His truth  
Trying to make you a follower of Christ and not his own follower

**Transition:** This was Paul's desire – wasn't seeking them to boost his own reputation

- A. So he could go to the Pastor's conference and tell everybody how big his church is
- B. His longing was to see them close to Christ! So much here for Pastor's to learn from

### IV. PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE GALATIANS

**Ga 4:19 (ESV)** my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

#### 1. His longing was centered in Christ – not his precious little ego

- A. He yearned to see these people become true disciples of Christ
  - 1). *Not only Christ in them but Christ formed in them* – huge difference
  - 2). Christ formed in their longings – their actions – their attitudes

#### 2. Notice the effort he puts in to it – like the anguish of childbirth

- A. He labored in preaching the truth  
He labored by praying for them (greatest gift a pastor can give to his people)  
Now he is laboring in trying to rescue them from the lies of the false teachers

**Thought:** Here is the heart of a faithful Pastor

Christ at the center of everything – Leading his people close to Christ

- A. He is pleading with them “My dear children” – get back on track – return to grace
  - 1). He is like a parent pleading with their children to escape that which is destroying them

#### 3. Paul is perplexed – at his wits end

**Ga 4:20 (ESV)** I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

- A. Like the parent who watches their children make such foolish choices that make no sense
  - 1). He watched them turn from Christ to follow these false teachers - who are only in it for themselves
  - 2). Perplexed - how can you make such a foolish choice? How can you not see how dumb it is?
- B. He wished he could be present – to change the tone – the letter has to be to the point
  - 1). It sounds harsh at times – with writing (Like an email) you don't hear the heartbreak etc.

**Transition:** Let's close this up and apply it – here we see the Pastor's heart

- A. We also learn some lessons of what the congregation should be like

## APPLICATION

### 1. The congregation must care about truth – even when it is hard

- A. The question is never – did it hurt? Was it hard?  
But was it Biblical? Did the teaching line up with Scripture?
- B. We must be like the Bereans who think – who take everything they heard back to the Word
  - 1). Judging the sweet and gentle things by it  
"It was so sweet, made me feel good - BUT was it Biblical? If it's not I must reject it."
  - 2). Judging the harsher, more severe things by the Word  
"It hurt - it stung - but was it Biblical? If it is I must accept it"
- C. There is no way to read this book that confronts our flesh and never be convicted - stung

**Thought:** The Pastor's job is simply to serve the people by bringing God's word – pure and undiluted

- A. Then the congregation must be mature enough to recognize the authority in that teaching
  - 1). If the Pastor has been faithful – the authority comes because it is God's Word
  - 2). Therefore it must be embraced and obeyed
    - a). Only then will we grown – only then will we have Christ fashioned into us

### 2. There are two parts in this – the teaching Pastor and the listening congregation

- A. And both parts revolve around Jesus Christ

**John Stott:** What should matter to the people is not the Pastor's appearance, but whether Christ is speaking through him. And what should matter to the Pastor is not the people's favor but whether Christ is formed in them. The church needs people who, in listening to their pastor, listen for the message of Christ, and pastors who in laboring among the people, look for the image of Christ. Only when a pastor and people thus *keep their eyes on Christ* will their mutual relations remain healthy, profitable, and pleasing to almighty God.

**Thought:** Let me just say this to those desiring to be in the ministry – here or those who download messages

- A. Do not seek prestige – attention
  - 1). Don't be like those who desired a following to boost their own ego – to be able to brag about it
    - a). Don't want a big church for that!
- B. Seek to see Christ formed in your people – seek to see them fall in love with Him
  - 1). Long for that – plead for that – pray about that - teach messages that accomplish that
  - 2). To do that you will have to preach messages that encourage, comfort and convict
    - a). Christ saturated messages that come out of study and prayer
    - b). As the people respond to that – they will have Christ formed in them