

Galatians 4:8–20

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1. How would one do “service unto them which by nature are no gods”?
 - “Howbeit when ye knew not God....” Paul obviously has the Gentiles in view as he is developing his figure. These are the Gentiles who had obeyed the Gospel in Galatians 3:26 (*cf.* Acts 13:42, 48; 14:1–3, 19–22). They had not known God while ignorant of Him (*cf.* Ephesians 2:11–13).
 - “Which by nature are no gods...” Paul makes the same argument of the OT prophets against the gods of the nations (*cf.* Acts 17:23–28; Isaiah 44:9–20; 45:20; Jeremiah 10:2–5, 14).
 - “Ye did service to them...” In their ignorance and hardness of heart they worshipped these images and yielded to the depraved ideas they represented.

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2. What are the “weak and beggarly elements” of the world? (*cf.* Galatians 4:3, Colossians 2:20)
- “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God....” To be known of God is to be saved from past sin, to be in Christ (Galatians 3:26–29). It is to love God (1 Corinthians 8:3). It is to be obedient (Titus 1:14–16; *cf.* Matthew 7:21–23; Luke 6:46). It is to glorify God and be thankful to Him (Romans 1:28). Those who are known of God hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:14–27).
 - “How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements ...” Paul continues to marvel (Galatians 1:6) that having believed the Gospel they would turn to Judaism which was wholly ineffectual respecting the forgiveness of sin (Romans 7:22–24).
 - “whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage...” Paul is speaking with respect to the effects, they were returned to bondage in sin (*cf.* Galatians 5:1).

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3. What are the “days, and months, and times, and years” mentioned in Galatians 4:10?
- “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years...” These are the special days imposed by the Hebrew religious calendar (1 Chronicles 23:31; Nehemiah 10:33; *cf.* Colossians 2:16; Romans 14:5).
- It seems that the sabbath and “unclean” foods were the chief issues disturbing first century Christians (*cf.* Colossians 2:20–23). Paul declared these things were matters of conscience and liberty (1 Corinthians 6, 8, 10; Romans 14). They were never required of the Gentiles, and the Gospel did not impose these things on Gentile converts (Acts 15).

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4. List the different Sabbaths found in Leviticus 23–25.
- Weekly (Leviticus 23:3)
 - First day of Unleavened Bread (23:6)
 - Seventh day of Unleavened Bread (23:8)
 - Sabbath of the Passover Week (23:9–11)
 - Seven Sabbaths until Passover (23:15–22)
 - Feast of Trumpets (23:23–25)
 - Day of Atonement (23:26–31)
 - First Day of Tabernacles (23:33–39)
 - The Seventh Year (25:1–7)
 - The Jubilee Year (25:8–17)

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5. What was Paul's infirmity in Galatians 4:13?
- "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh ..." If you know tell me. (See: 2 Corinthians 11:23–28)
 - "I preached the gospel unto you at the first..." Paul is referring to his arrival in Galatia on the first preaching tour (Acts 13–14).

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BONUS: What does Paul mean when he urges them to “Be as I am; for I am as ye are”?

- “Be as I am...” remember the context, Paul is talking about their blessed liberty. He had been a Jew and was freed from the Law through faith in Christ (Romans 7:1–6). He being a Jew had not compelled them to become Jews. Paul affirms their equality (*cf.* 3:28); their mutual freedom from the Law, and their common faith in Christ.
- “For I am as ye are...” The *NKJV* says, “become like me, for I became like you,” (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 9:19–21). They are free, they have liberty, and both stand before their Lord (Romans 14:4–13).

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6. Why did some regard Paul an enemy?

- “Ye have not injured me at all...” Paul lauds the hospitality and kindness which he received from the Galatians (4:13–14a). There is nothing that would justify any conclusion that Paul felt any enmity toward the Galatians.
- “Where is the blessedness ye spake of...” The Galatians had accepted Paul as a Messenger of God (*cf.* 3:5). They were exceeding happy that God sent him to them.
- “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth...” Consider the irony of the question. Paul was not telling them anything different than he had told them on the first trip (Acts 13:38–39).

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BONUS: What does Paul mean by “zealously affect”?

- “They zealously affect you...” *NKJV* says, “They zealously court you...” which I believe is the sense. The party spirit was at work among the Galatians (Galatians 5:20; Romans 10:2; *cf.* Matthew 23:15; Acts 15:5) .
- “But not well; yea, they would exclude you ...” The *effect of the affect* was that the Judaizers were separating brethren into parties in order to enhance their own party.
- “That ye might affect them...” The desired result was that by excluding the Galatians from one another they might include them in their own party. This is the seed from which denominationalism sprouts and grows.

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7. How is Christ formed in you?

- “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again...” Paul says he will “travail,” struggle in childbirth, *again* (*cf.* Galatians 4:27; Revelation 12:2). The metaphor is reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 3:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7. As God cared for Israel as an infant (Deuteronomy 1:31; Acts 13:18). So Paul sought to birth them in the image of Christ.
- “Until Christ be formed in you...” This formation of Christ was directly related to the Gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 10; James 1:18). The Galatians were being removed from Christ and need to be restored.

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8. Why did Paul stand in doubt of these brethren?

- “I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice...” Paul understood that his tone was harsh, perhaps more so because of his absence. (Matthew 18:15–17)
- “For I stand in doubt of you...” However, their behavior was the basis for his tough love and correction. He was at a complete loss to justify, let alone explain their choice of the Law above the Gospel (1:6; 3:1; 4:9, 15).

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Today's Take Aways

1. Paganism is no worse than corrupted religion.
2. There is a sense in which our labor is vain, when those upon whom it is bestowed fall away.
3. In Christ we are equal and free through our common faith.
4. The point is not Paul's infirmity, but his love for the Galatian churches.
5. Some folks want you until you tell them the truth.
6. Some folks want you so they can use you.
7. Some folks want you to help you and love you.

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