

Galatians, Chapter Four, Lesson Two

CORRECTING WITH COMPASSION Galatians 4:12-20

STIMULATE

** As our study concluded last week, we committed to live our lives "Never Turning Back" to our old lifestyles, but to give Him the "gift" of our loving obedience each day. Do you recall the subtle error made by the Galatians and even Christians today, as they try to live out their lives by the Grace of God?

Not depending totally upon that grace at all times, but thinking you are good enough to make it on your own.

** How have you done this past week, obeying the Lord by the power of His grace?

Each time that I would see God's marvelous grace at work, I was reminded of how important my "gift" of obedience was, and that would bring my heart back to where the Lord wants it to stay.

MOTIVATE

** Our joy as Christians is to walk each day in sweet fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. How should we respond to those who might get caught up in the same error as did the Galatians? Today the apostle Paul will show us how to be "Correcting with Compassion" those who need to be reminded of God's precious truth. Please join me now in Galatians 4:12-20, as we see the loving heart of the apostle and strive to make it the pattern for our own lives.

Read Passage (V.12-15) (V.16-20)

Opening Prayer

Correcting with Compassion

INVESTIGATE

V.12 ** What change in Paul's tone becomes apparent as we open our passage for today?

Compassion! Up to this point in his epistle, Paul has firmly presented three and one half chapters of sound doctrine. cf. Galatians 3:1 and 3

Although he was an apostle of Jesus Christ with the authority to demand obedience, he "begs" them to follow his pattern.

** Why do you suppose that Paul is now softening his tone as he addresses this very serious issue?

Paul knew that when you are sharing the truth of God's precious word with others, you must maintain a balance between God's unarguable truth and His merciful love and compassion with sinners. All see - 2Timothy 2:22-25, Paul is telling Timothy to strike a balance...

- 1) Live a holy lifestyle... (V.22-23)
- 2) Do not be quarrelsome ... (V.24)
- 3) Be kind to all...
- 4) Be able to teach, proclaim the truth!

- 5) Be patient when wronged...
- 6) Be gentle when correcting those in opposition to the truth of God! (V.25)
- 7) Pray for God to grant them repentance!

** Now back in Galatians 4:12, what is Paul begging the Galatians to do?

"...become as I am..." No longer try to earn your salvation by trying to keep the Law.
(Galatians 2:19-20)

** What does Paul mean that he also had become as they are?

He too had been delivered from the yoke of slavery to legalism through the keeping of the Law, he too had been saved by grace through faith just like the Galatians. cf. Philippians 3:4-6

** What reassuring statement does Paul use to remind the Galatians of the close relationship they have with him and of the compassion in his heart for them?

"You have done me no wrong!" Even with their temporary defection to another gospel (1:6), he wants them to know he still loves them.

V.13 ** Paul now reminds them of the rather unusual set of circumstances that brought about his sharing the gospel with the Galatians in the first place. What was it?

"...it was because of a bodily illness..."

** Do we need to have what we consider to be just the right setting to present the gospel to others?

Absolutely not! God can use every opportunity to reach those that He has placed in our path. One theory regarding Paul suggests that while on his first missionary journey he contracted a disease in the swampy regions of Pamphylia and went north into the higher, healthier area of Galatia to recover. God used his illness as a precursor to sharing of the gospel with the lost sinners of Galatia. He can use any circumstance in our life, as well, to bring His saving truth to those around us.

V.14 ** How did Paul's bodily condition impact those who met him face to face?

It was a "trial" for them, the normal response would have been one of revulsion.

** Did the Galatians turn Paul away during this time of personal illness?

No, they "...did not despise or loathe..." Paul.

despise [exoutheneo] means to count as nothing or worthless.
loathe [ekptuo] means literally to spit, as an act of contempt.

The Galatians did neither!

** What did they do?

They received Paul "...as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself."

** What does that mean?

They treated Paul, even in his repulsive condition, with the same love, devotion, reverence and acceptance as they would have for God in Christ Jesus! This was a measure of God's grace going before Paul to prepare the hearts of the Galatians.

**** Why would Paul spend time reminding the Galatians of their early relationship with him?**

He was reminding them as a frame of reference for what he was about to say in the next verse.

V.15 ** How would you describe a "sense of blessing"?

Blessing [makarismos] can be translated "happiness" or "satisfaction" and implies a feeling of joy, fulfillment, and contentedness -- to the point that you would be willing to suffer physically for another and still count it all joy.

**** Does Paul's testimony of the Galatians confirm this kind of blessing existed with them?**

Yes, they were willing "if possible" to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul, joyfully!

V.16 ** Have you ever heard the expression "The truth hurts"? Would only an enemy be accused of hurting you with the truth?

No, in fact Jesus said that our enemies would try to hurt us with lies! cf. Matthew 5:10-12

**** Then what are you if you share the truth of God's word with someone, even if it is going to cause them pain for a season?**

You are a friend indeed! cf. Proverbs 27:5-6
All see - 2Corinthians 7:5-10

**** So what is the answer to Paul's question in verse 16?**

No, he has not become their enemy, but has proven himself to be their friend. Their oneness in Christ is alive and well!

V.17 ** Who are the seekers that Paul is referring to?

"They" are the Judaizers that have been the motivation for this whole letter.
cf. Galatians 1:7, 9 & 2:4

**** How aggressive were these "seekers"?**

They were "eagerly" pursuing the Galatians.
The term literally meant "taking a serious interest in someone", i.e. - a man courting a woman. These were false suitors though, with no genuine love for the Galatians. cf. Matthew 23:15

**** According to Paul the actions of these Judaizers were not commendable, what was their motivation?**

They wanted "to shut [the Galatians] out" from Paul's gospel and the grace of God for salvation.

**** If they could succeed, what would be the result?**

The Galatians would then seek to follow the Judaizers and not draw close to Christ through faith.
cf. Galatians 6:12, Matthew 27:22-25, Acts 5:28

V.18 ** So, is it wrong to seek after someone with the truth?

No! In fact it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner. If we pursue someone with God's gospel, for their salvation and His glory, it is indeed commendable and good for them.

** Who had already done that with the Galatians?

The apostle Paul had when he was "present" with them on his first missionary journey.

V.19 ** To restate his great love for his children in the faith, what metaphor does Paul now use?

That of a mother in labor with her child! There is no greater love, sacrifice, devotion or care, than that of a mother giving birth to her children. Paul used the same word picture when describing his love for the Thessalonians. cf. 1Thessalonians 2:7-8

** How do you suppose we should view ourselves, if the Lord places us in the position of correcting someone who has wandered from the truth of the gospel?

In the exact same loving, sacrificial, devoted and caring role that Paul assumed with the Galatians!

** What was the goal of Paul's motherly love for the Galatians?

He desired only that "Christ is formed in you..."
cf. Colossians 2:6 and Romans 8:29

V.20 ** What would Paul rather be doing instead of writing to the "churches in Galatia"?

He would rather be with them in person and to be able to change his corrective tone. Paul longs for the sweet fellowship experienced by believers of like precious faith (2Peter 1:1). He desires to have no need to correct false teaching, but just to praise the Lord together for their common salvation by grace through faith.

** In what state of mind did all of this leave Paul?

He was perplexed [aporeo] - lit. to be at a loss, or at your wit's end.

** Did Paul's perplexed mental state forbid him from "Correcting with Compassion" the error of some of the believers in Galatia?

No, not at all. He did not lean on his own understanding, but instead acknowledge God's truth in all his ways and the Lord made his path straight!
cf. Proverbs 3:5-6

EXTRICATE

** What are some of the phrases that Paul used today to express his compassion for the Galatians?

- 1) I beg of you, brethren... (V.12)
- 2) You have done me no wrong... (V.12)

3) You received me as Christ Himself... (V.14)

4) My children, I am again in labor... (V.19)

5) I could wish to be present with you... (V.20)

DELINEATE

** Does Paul abandon his stand for accurate doctrine in this wonderful show of compassion.

Absolutely not! He uses his compassion to correct the error and bring his Galatians to the truth.

EVALUATE

** Would you consider this question, "When I get the opportunity to stand for the truth of the gospel, do I become a callous Bible basher or am I willing to show the love and compassion of Jesus Christ to my listener without compromising the truth?"

ACTIVATE

** Let's ask the Lord for some opportunities this next week to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Father, help us to be bold with your truth and overflowing with Your love to others. Please teach us to be "Correcting with Compassion" any that you bring our way who do not know Your saving truth.

Closing prayer