

**The Epistle to the Galatians**  
**Lesson #14 • Galatians 4:8-11**

**“A Return to Bondage”**

**• HANDOUT •**

► At this point in his letter to the Galatians, Paul has completed his formal argument that salvation is received by grace through faith and not by the works or accomplishments men do thru the Law.

However, we will also see Paul's frustration and unwillingness to end this discussion without trying to appeal and reason, one more time, with the Galatians and the Judaizers. The heart of the matter remains: The Judaizers are still claiming that believing Gentiles need to also to follow the letter of the Law, in addition to expressing their faith in Christ, **if** they are to become sons of God and have true salvation.

To this end, Paul reminds his Gentile converts of their former bondage in paganism. He also expresses astonishment that they would even be influenced by the Judaizers or consider a return to the Law and the resulting spiritual slavery. In view of this possibility, he sadly confesses that he is concerned [and perhaps a bit depressed] that his labors among them has been without purpose.

Galatians 4:8-9a • Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who, by nature, are not gods. But now that you know God – or rather are known by God – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?

► **NOTE:** James Montgomery Boice, [1928<>2000], an American theologian and *world-acclaimed expert in Scriptural authority*, states that the English translation of verses 8 and 9 have lost the force of the Greek text. Boice suggests using the following translation, which he believes better preserves the power and thrust of the Greek text:

***"But how can it be that, on the one hand, having formerly been in ignorance of God and therefore enslaved to those who are not gods and, on the other hand, having come to know God or (which is more to the point) being known by Him, you are now returning anew to those weak and bankrupt elements which once controlled you?"***

Q: What does the statement, “when you did not know God” refer to? Doesn't most everyone acknowledge that there is a God?

Q: Who are the “non-gods” Paul refers to when he said the Galatians were “enslaved by those who were not gods?”

Q: When Paul says that **by nature**, the pagan idols were not gods, what does he mean?

Q: There are 3 kinds of “knowing” in Greek. How does Paul speak of “knowing God” in this passage?

1. Oida =
2. Orao =
3. Ginosko =

► Paul uses \_\_\_\_\_ to speak of “knowing” God but the way he uses it tells us that:

► The following verses, authored by the Apostle John, supports Paul's statement in Galatians:  
We know and love God because:

*[1 John 4:19 • This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.]*

We are capable of knowing God through:

*[John 14:7 • If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.]*

We are able to manifest God's character through:

*[John 15:26 • [Jesus speaking] “But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me.]*

**Galatians 4:9b-10 • Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!**

Q: Paul seems to be quite amazed when he posed the question in the above verse. What has caused Paul's sense of astonishment?

Q: What were the Galatians turning back to? Was it pagan idolatry or was it because of the Judaizer's strong influence in this primarily Gentile community?

Q: What is the significance of Paul's reference that the Galatians were observing special days and months and seasons and years!

These were Jewish observances under the Law.

“**Days**”:

“**Months**”:

“**Seasons**”:

“**Years**”:

Q: Why would Paul object to these? They were observances instituted by God and God's Law is good.

Q: Why does Paul emphasize the term, "turning back?"

Acts 26:20-b · ...I preached [to the Gentiles] that they should repent and turn [be converted] to God prove their repentance by their deeds.

Q: Why was standing firm with the Gospel proving to be so difficult for the Galatians?

Q: Is Paul devastated because he seems to have lost control of the believers in Galatia? Or is he just a little angry that the Judaizers are, once again, interfering with his ministry and they seem to have won this time?

2 Peter 2:20-22 · If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Galatians 4:11 · I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Q: Paul begins his final thought by expressing fear for the Galatian Church. What is it that he fears?

Q: How should we understand Paul saying that he feared it was "my efforts on you" which were wasted?

Colossians 1:28-29 · "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all His energy, which so powerfully works in me."

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Romans 15:18-21 · "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.

So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation." Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about Him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." [ref: Isaiah 52:15]

Q: How does the statement that Paul feared his efforts had been wasted on the Galatians, compare to Paul's teachings elsewhere?

Q: Was true Christianity with its relationship with the Lord even possible for them now?

**Note: In the end, Galatia became an early stronghold for the Christian church ...**



Next Time · Lesson #15

## ~~ Compassion & Zeal ~~

Galatians 4:12-20

