

The Epistle to the Galatians
Lesson #15 • Galatians 4:12-18

“Compassion & Zeal”

• **H A N D O U T** •

► Up to this point in his Epistle to the Believers at Galatia, Paul has dealt with the issues facing them as doctrinal issues and has approached the subject matter in a scholarly, and distant, manner. In fact, the most endearing term he has used, thus far, toward the congregation was to call them "brothers." [But, since that was a common way of addressing one another within the Christian community at that time, calling them “brothers” wasn't all that special.]

Now, in this study, we see an abrupt and dramatic change in the way he addresses the Galatians. The intensity of his deep love and pastoral concern bursts through. His staunch, biblical and theological discussions give way to warm, endearing, and even pleading tones. He will still address them as “brothers,” but he will also call them “dear children.” [This term was common in John's writings, but Paul only used the term here, in this letter, and it was used just this one time, making it extremely meaningful.] It is also quite significant that Paul addressed these people in this endearing manner immediately after he wrote his harsh and sad comments about fearing his work among them had been a failure and his time with them had been wasted.

Galatians 4:12a • I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you.

Q: These opening words are, at best, strange coming from Paul. Shouldn't he be urging them to become like Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior? Why does Paul say they should be like him?

Q: What does it mean for Paul to say “I became like you?”

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 • Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.

To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.

To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak.

I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Q: How should we compare Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians with his statement in verse 12 to the Believers at Galatia?

Q: In the Corinthians passage above, Paul states that he became all things to all men in order he might save some. Is Paul claiming to have the ability to grant salvation?

Galatians 4:12b-14 • You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn.

Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.

Q: In Galatians 4:12b Paul states: “you have done me no wrong.” What does Paul mean?

Q: Though Paul never discloses the nature of his illness, he does give us some hints. What do we know from the brief statements he has made?

Q: In what way is it significant that Paul arrived in Galatia with some kind of physical infirmity?

Q: We are quite certain that Paul didn't start his ministry with any kind of physical ailment that would have caused a reaction of contempt or scorn. So what happened to Paul?

Q: What does Paul mean by the statement: “*the Galatians welcomed him as though he was an angel of God – as if he were Christ Jesus Himself?*”

► To answer this question we must look at the statement in its two distinct parts”

1. Paul as an angel of God

2. Paul being received as Christ Jesus Himself.

Matthew 10:40-42 · [Jesus said] "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

John 13:19b · "I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

Q: What conclusion can we come to regarding this statement in verse 14?

Paul now confronts the Galatians about the change in their attitude toward him ...

Galatians 4:15-16 · What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Q: What is the "joy" that Paul asks about?

Q: What is Paul referring to when he said he *knew* the Galatians were willing to "*tear out their eyes and give them to Paul?*"

Q: Why were the Galatians, who once received Paul with joy, now treating Paul as their enemy?

Q: What is the "truth" that was causing all the problems?

Q: It was during this time period that the Judaizers tried to compromise by blending the Law with Grace, making Christianity an extension of Judaism. Why would this compromise not be acceptable to the authority of the Gospel?

Paul exposes the Judaizer's true motivation ...

Galatians 4:17-18 • Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.

Q: What are the two things Paul points out about the actions of the Judaizers?

1.

2.

Q: What does it mean to be “zealous?”

Q: What does Paul say was the motive that drove the Judaizer's zeal?

Q: When is “zealousness” a godly trait?

Q: Paul states that the Judaizers' motive for their zealousness ended up alienating the Community of Faith in Galatia. What is significant about Paul using the word “alienate?”



Next Time • Lesson #16

~~ **An Old Testament Allegory** ~~

Part A

Galatians 4:19-23

