

AN APPEAL TO REKINDLE AFFECTION FOR THE MINISTER OF GOD

GALATIANS 4:12-20

Galatians 4:12-20 (KJV)

^{4:12} Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all.

¹³ Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

¹⁴ And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

¹⁶ Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

¹⁷ They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

¹⁸ But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you.

¹⁹ My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

²⁰ I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

Galatians 4:12-20 (TLB)

^{4:12} Dear brothers, please feel as I do about these things, for I am as free from these chains as you used to be. You did not despise me then when I first preached to you,

¹³ even though I was sick when I first brought you the Good News of Christ.

¹⁴ But even though my sickness was revolting to you, you didn't reject me and turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Jesus Christ himself.

¹⁵ Where is that happy spirit that we felt together then? For in those days I know you would gladly have taken out your own eyes and given them to replace mine if that would have helped me.

¹⁶ And now have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

¹⁷ Those false teachers who are so anxious to win your favor are not doing it for your good. What they are trying to do is to shut you off from me so that you will pay more attention to them.

¹⁸ It is a fine thing when people are nice to you with good motives and sincere hearts, especially if they aren't doing it just when I am with you!

¹⁹ Oh, my children, how you are hurting me! I am once again suffering for you the pains of a mother waiting for her child to be born—longing for the time when you will finally be filled with Christ.

²⁰ How I wish I could be there with you right now and not have to reason with you like this, for at this distance I frankly don't know what to do.

When a person wanders away from God and slides back into the world, what is the proper way to respond to him? Not only was this the reality of the people that Paul addressed in Galatia, but there was another problem coupled with backsliding...and that was false teachers that were leading them away from the very teaching of Paul. God had used Paul to preach and teach to these Galatians, but the false teachers were declaring that all Paul declared was false and inaccurate. It was not the heart of Paul to accuse, to offend, but to reorient these saints to the God that loved them, and redeemed them. Since God is love, Paul could not be the servant of God and hurt these saints for the love of God dwelled in him. Paul gives these saints a "fourfold appeal" within these verses.

1. AN APPEAL...TO TREAT THE MINISTER OF GOD AS A BROTHER. (v.12)

It was the desire of the "false teachers" to completely disorient these saints to the truth...back to a life of "rules and regulations. Paul's appeal is for these saints to remember that Paul was their "brother" by the power of Christ. Paul wasn't their enemy or attempting to hurt them, but desired them all to come to a deeper knowledge of the truth. Paul reminded them that he had always loved them, cared for them, and his call was to respond to him with the same brotherly love that he had shown them. The sobering difference between Paul and "false teachers" was this...false teachers cannot and do not love unconditionally...yet that was the love of Paul for these saints. Though the saints had backslidden from the truth, Paul was not angry at them, or bitter toward them, but still loved them...just as God loved them. What a wonderful picture of "godly love". The heart of Paul is the picture of a true minister...one of love, kindness and care despite what he has undergone, and despite their backslidden response. The disobedience of other believers never gives God's servant to respond with anything less than love and kindness. Since Paul was the "servant of God". The message he delivered came to these saints as though it came from God Himself. To turn away from Paul's teaching was to turn away from the very teaching of Holy God.

2. AN APPEAL...TO WELCOME TRUE MINISTERS OF GOD. (v.13-16)

When Paul went to these Galatians the first time, they welcomed him, and the message that he preached...for he preached the very gospel of God. There was no question of his call, his integrity, or his character. There was not any censoring or criticism, as a matter of fact, their arms were open to him, and the message that he preached. Paul is appealing to these saints to be sensitive to him, as they had been at first. He had not changed. He still loved them, and their call was to “welcome” him. For in so doing they are welcoming the very presence of Holy God. Their welcome was so open that they even received Paul as an angel come from God. Their love for Paul at first was such that they would have plucked out their eyes for Paul. The appeal that Paul declares is for them to once again welcome him, and other ministers just as they had done. False teaching had affected them, and infected them, and the call of God was for them to be reoriented to His servant, and learn the truth...and experience the fullness and freedom of God. God responds in might and power when a people respond to His servant with an open heart and spirit. To reject the minister of God is to simply reject the very servant of God and the very one that carries the Word of God to His people. Paul declares in *1 Timothy 5:17*, “*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*” Paul knew well, the future of this church was strongly affected by “the way the responded to God’s servant”, and that is the case in all the Lord’s church.

3. AN APPEAL...TO GUARD AGAINST AND REJECT FALSE TEACHERS. (v.17)

The sobering reality was this, there were false teachers that were not going to easily relinquish their hold on these believers. Yet, the appeal of Paul is “to reject” the false teachers. The false teachers were attempting to keep these saints away from the true servant of God. False teachers today attempt to keep people from faithfully being in the house of God, and serving God through the local church. All true teachers will always orient God’s people to be faithful in the Lord’s church if at all possible, false teachers will not. The false teachers sought out “disciples” and did all they could to tear down “true preachers”. A false teacher will always: orient to law, works, effort, ceremony, rules, things that “man can do” in order to become acceptable before God. A true teacher always orients to the finished work of Jesus at the cross for man to be acceptable before God. A true teacher always orients to the Living God, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, The Holy Spirit of God. While false teachers are “zealous”. They never will lead a person to faith in God through Christ. When listening to any teacher it is wise to always ask this question, “Has this person spoken much of Jesus Christ to be right with God, or works to be right with God?” The answer will orient to the fact if he is teaching truly or falsely. “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” *Mt. 7:15* “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.*” *1 Tim. 4:1-2*

4. AN APPEAL...TO RECEIVE ALL TRUE MINISTERS. (v.18-20)

While there were those that desired to exploit the saints, through false teaching, Paul makes it clear that the saints of God should always receive true ministers of God who labor well for the welfare of the church. Paul not only encouraged these saints to welcome him, but to welcome all who preach and teach the blessed gospel of Christ. While the church must always reject false teaching, it must always welcome true teachers. It is through the teaching and preaching of true servants, that the Lord’s church grows, and functions as He sees fit. Just as a loving mother prepares food to feed her children for their welfare, a true servant of God delivers the Word of God to the people of God to nourish their souls into vitality and health. There are at least three reasons that God’s people should welcome God’s servant.

First...a true minister has on his heart the very people of God. There is a tender warmth toward the people of God for that servant of God.

Second...true ministers have on their heart that true believer become conformed to the very image of Christ. Paul was not preaching a message of “self effort”, but the very power of God unto salvation. It is the very nature of God that we be conformed to the image of His Son, and that is the very heart of the true minister of God.

Third...a true minister guards the church against error. Paul was not going to stand idly by and allow false teachers to infiltrate the church...because God loves His people and God’s servants love God’s people. It is on the very mind of true minister to lovingly protect and guard the flock of God, the people of God from “false”, “worldly” teaching that may appear “good” but before God it is error through and through. When the church of the Lord Jesus Christ receives the true servant of God, they are receiving the very one that delivers the very Word of God to the people of God, that there may be life lived to its abundance and fullness.