

TITLE: A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE

TEXT: GALATIANS 4:8-20

INTRO: Many times I've studied with & even baptized people, only to see them return to their non-Christian lives. It is always such a painful experience. But it doesn't mean I'm doing the wrong thing. Paul experienced this too. But he never judged the strength of his own Christianity by the actions of those he taught. Instead he kept teaching them, and others.

I. TOWARD SLAVERY (v. 8-11):

- A. (v. 8) "*Then (when servants and not sons –v.7), when you knew not God, you did service to (were a slave to) them...no gods.*" It seems most likely that Paul is addressing mainly Gentile Christians who had converted to Christianity, possibly after converting to Judaism. Before they knew God, they were slaves to them which are by nature no gods. This sounds like idol worship, but in the context of this chapter (and overall letter context), may still be a reference to Judaism (considering they returned to it – v.9f).
- B. (v. 9-10) "*But now, after ye have known God...known by God...*" Here is a picture of true Christianity – knowing God, and being known (accepted) by God. So many people today claim to know God (have "accepted Jesus into their hearts"), but still aren't known by God, because they haven't obeyed His plan of salvation. It is a wonderful thing when someone "accepts Jesus as his personal Savior." But he needs to search the Scriptures asking, "when does Jesus accept me?" (see Gal 3:27) - "*How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly (poor, lowly, needy) elements (rudiments – v.3; Col 2:20)...to which you desire again to be in bondage?*" You desire slavery again! He then defines this in v. 10– *observing days, months...*(i.e., Judaism).
- C. (v. 11) Paul feared that he may have labored for them in vain. How could this be so, if "once saved, always saved" is true?

II. TOWARD THE TEACHER OF TRUTH (v. 12-16):

- A. **Their friend (v. 12-14).** "*Be as I am, for I am as ye (were).*" I was zealous toward Judaism (1:13-14 – persecuting the church, and "being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers"). But now I'm a Christian, not holding to Judaism. "*Ye have not injured (offended, hurt, been unjust to) me at all.*" Your sin in practicing Judaism (v.10), though it would cause me to have labored for you in vain (v. 11), is not a personal sin against me. It's not a personal matter. Paul is saying this in order to be able to encourage them in regard to how they had treated him in the past (v. 13-14). (v. 13-14) "*Ye know how through infirmity (disease, sickness, weakness) of the flesh I preached...*" We are not told what this sickness was (many speculations; v.15, possibly same as his thorn in the flesh – 1 Cor 12). You didn't despise or reject me because of it, but received me like you would an angel or even Christ himself!
- B. **Their enemy (v. 15-16).** "*Where is this blessedness (from v.14)?*" They cared so much for him before that they would've plucked out their own eyes and given them to him (this seems to explain his infirmity, and possibly his "large letters" in 6:11). Apparently their reception of him has changed. (v. 16) "*Have I become your enemy, telling you the truth?*" How often this happens! We love people as long as they say what we want to hear! Many friends have shunned me because I have taught the truth from the Bible. Even members of the church have gotten upset with me for mentioning the Bible! It's one thing to not know or fully understand the truth, but to be willing to study. It is completely different see the truth in the Word, reject it, and reject the teacher!

III. TOWARD FALSE TEACHERS (v. 17-20):

- A. Judaizers' motives (v. 17-18)
 - 1. (v. 17) "*They zealously affect you (earnestly desire, pursue; positive or negative)... – but not well.*" So the word is being used negatively, though they pretend to mean it positively. They show up here and earnestly exhort you, pretending to be good, godly teachers. But they really have bad motives. This is a good description of false teachers. We don't usually know their true motives right away, but we'll see eventually. Judaizers' motives were to keep the law – Gentiles can't be saved w/out circumcision, etc. Today it's about power, money, and pleasing the people, not God. They appeal to the "I want it my way" mentality of religion. Never mind what God wants!
 - 2. "*They would exclude you, that ye might affect (seek – same word as above) them.*" There seems to be a 'bait & switch' idea here – the Judaizers pretend to earnestly desire the Gentiles to be a part of their "Jewish church," luring them in with feigned love, then they tell them they have to be circumcised and observe feast days, etc.
 - 3. (v. 18) "*It's good to be zealously affected in a good thing...*" Zeal is great! The church suffers because of members who lack any zeal for God, the church, etc. But zeal must be based on knowledge. Many in the church seem to feel that zeal and emotion are the true substances of religion. But in *Rom 10:2, Paul described these Jews as having a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. God's word must be the standard. Then our zeal will be for godly things.
- B. Paul's concern (v. 19-20). "*I travail in birth again for you until Christ be formed in you.*" Here is a strong statement of true love for these brethren (compared to the false motives of the Judaizers). For the true Christian teacher, the emotion involved in teaching others about Christianity (love, joy, stress, depression, etc., depending on the response of the students) is compared to birth pains! Notice "*again*" – Paul had already gone through this emotional time with them in their original conversion. Now he has to deal with it again! (v. 20) So he desires to be with them, and help them understand and obey the truth, so he can change his tone (his doubt)! It will be very stressful for Paul until he can be there, address the "Judaism" issue, and know their responses. Certainly any preacher, teacher, evangelist, etc. today can relate to these feelings!

CONCLUSION: We can't control the reactions and responses to the gospel message of the people with whom we study. But we can keep trying, just as Paul did. We can also control ourselves, and how we grow in the knowledge of God. This will be a great comfort to those who have studied with and taught us, and desire to see us succeed spiritually.