

Date: 23 Apr 2023

Scripture Passage: Galatians 4:8-20

Title: A Plea To Return To Christ

Introduction

- Jewish false teachers (Judaizers) teaching “faith plus” doctrine of salvation. Condemned (1:9). The churches there were troubled by these false teachers who claimed to come from the church in Jerusalem, having the authority of the apostles there, and they were propagating a false gospel. They were basically saying that faith in Jesus Christ is insufficient. You must also add to faith Works of the law. You must be circumcised. You must keep the cleansing laws. You must keep the food laws. You must do this and do that. So faith in Christ is not good enough. You must have dos and don'ts keeping to the laws of Moses. Then you will be saved. Then you will be complete as Christians
- Paul had to defend teaching & apostleship, with the aim of rescuing Galatian Christians. He had to show to the people that the gospel he preached was the true gospel, the same as the gospel preached by the Apostles in Jerusalem. The Gospel he preached was salvation by faith in Christ alone. You are not saved by any other things you do. You are saved solely by just trusting in Christ, who died on the cross to save sinners. When you come to faith in Christ, your sins are regarded as punished when Christ died on the cross for you. The righteousness you need is regarded as given to you so that God accepts you as his children. So justification is by faith, not by works. Gal 1:9.
- Salvation is by faith, not works. Law restrains sin, & leads to Christ alone (3:24). Fulfilled (4:6-7). For what purpose was the law given? When Abraham believed in the promise of the coming savior, he was accepted by God. The law was (i) to show God's perfect character (ii) to show our sins (iii) to drive us to Christ. The law revealed to us that we are not perfect. We therefore needed salvation by faith in Christ.
- A powerful plea for those drawn away by error to return to Christ. To return to the true gospel. Not to follow the false teaching of the Judaizers. This is a powerful plea for those who are drawn away by error to return to Christ.

I. The adverse outcome of following the wrong teaching (8-11).

- You are now believers, indwelt by Spirit, set free from bondage. Consider what you were before (8). You serve those by nature not gods. Paul is contrasting the time these Galatians had faith in Christ. He asks them to think of the time before their conversion. You were worshipping what you claim to be gods, When by nature they are not Gods. Consider the stones that you've carved out and worshipped.

What is the difference between to know God and to be known by God? Isn't it the same thing to know God as it is to be known by God? Paul emphasizes in the first chapter of Romans, every single person knows God, and it is the basis of our judgment that we do know him. But Paul makes that abundantly clear that no man has an excuse, because everybody already knows that God exists.

On the one hand, it refers to a cognitive awareness, and every creature in the universe has an intellectual or cognitive awareness of God. Yet at the same time, it has a much deeper meaning where it talks about a meaning of knowing by way of personal intimacy. When the Bible says that “Adam knew his wife and she conceived”. It shows that it wasn't mere cognitive awareness, but an intimate personal knowing of her. It is used for the deepest knowledge of intimacy. And that's the word that is used for us in the New Testament in terms of our saving knowledge of God. And so, Paul says, you didn't know God in that sense. But now you know God.

But isn't it true that God knows everybody in? The whole world. Before they're even born, he knows them cognitively, but he doesn't have an intimate saving knowledge of them. If he knew every person savingly, then every creature would be saved. But it is special “to be known by God”.

Remember how Jesus ended the sermon on the Mount? The severe warning that he gave at the end of that when He said many will come on the Last day and say: “Lord Lord, have we not done this in your name? Didn't we do that in your name? And Jesus warns then that he will say to them. Depart from me. For I never knew you. I never knew you. You, who were workers of iniquity.”.

Many have a head knowledge of God. They don't know God in that deep personal way, such that there is a personal relationship that he is your God, you are his son or his daughter. That relationship is forged only to faith in Christ. You become a son of God, a daughter of God, only to faith in Jesus Christ. And when you come to faith in

How were you delivered (9a)? After you have known God, or rather are known (loved) by God. So when you come to know God. You are actually known by God and the word to known is to love, love deeply. To know God is know God in a personal way, not just having a hidden knowledge. Because He first loved us. God's “love”, His sovereign choice from eternity (4 cf. Eph. 1:10; 7 cf Eph. 1:11-12). Hence Eph. 2:8-9 cf. Gal. 2:16.

- By following Judaizers, you are turning your back on Christ & salvation in Him (9b). What will happen when you follow false teaching? You are actually reverting to your own way of life, where you trust in your effort. You were pagans trying to earn your salvation by your effort. And now you are following the Jewish laws, which amounts to the same thing you are relying on your effort. Why is it that you observe days and months and seasons and years? You look upon. Observation of days is so important. So it might be Jewish, but the underlying principle is the same. You are going back to reliance on self on your effort and when you rely on your effort, you know that you will have no assurance of salvation because you are so weak. And therefore you will be plagued with. A lot of doubts. And you will be shaken and toss about. These have been called the beggarly elements. The elementary things of this world.

You will be in bondage if you rely on your own efforts for your salvation. there is salvation not in yourself, not in your effort, but in Jesus Christ. God has provided that way. That is by faith in his Son. When finally they come to faith in Christ, oh, what glorious liberty. You are set free from the need to rely on your effort, which never saves.

Paul, therefore, is urging the people don't turn back to your old way of life by listening to the Judaizers. You are in fact doing that you're turning back to the beggarly elements that leads to bondage

- Laboured like woman giving birth. New birth by Spirit, but human instruments. All in vain? Danger of being in bondage, losing salvation. Paul says. I'm afraid for you. He's so very concerned for them. In the end, you are the one who will suffer and you will be lost. You are in danger of being becoming an apostate. Then all my hard work for you. All my prayer for you. All my concern and labor for you. All this will come to nothing. Or has it been in vain? To return to Christ is that you must be careful by following the wrong teaching. You're going back to be in bondage. And you are in danger of losing your salvation.

II. The adverse outcome of rejecting the true teacher (12-16).

- “Become like me now, free from bondage of law. I became like you, free from the law.” Paul is saying. Once Upon a time, I was a Pharisee. I was a very strict Jews. I was relying on law keeping to save myself. And then I came to faith in Christ, where there's no need for law keeping. And we are safe by grace to faith in him in Christ. So that message was shared to you. And now you are rejecting it. No, rather be like me now. Being one who is trusting in Christ alone for acceptance before God, so be like me, just as as I was like you. I became like you before, so don't rely on the law.
- When I first came, you did not injure me, unlike the Jews who did (12b cf. Acts 13:42, 48). The Jews actually were hostile towards him and attacked him, but the Gentiles did not hunt Paul. They welcomed him. Scholars have been debating what the infirmity was. But the point is that the Galatians knew that Paul was so sick and they took care of him. And the Galatians did not despise him. The Galatians were so very kind to him. And

Paul says that at that time you welcome me like you welcome an Angel of God. And in fact, you welcome me as though you are welcoming Jesus Christ himself.

- What a contrast now - have I become your enemy? For what reason, for telling you the truth? But what a contrast now Paul is saying. Have I become an enemy to you? And and become an enemy. For what? For telling you the truth? **Read v16**. In the past, you were so welcoming. You were even prepared to give me your eyes. If it were possible. But why now? Are you rejecting me? Do you not realize that if you reject me, who is the true apostle? You are also rejecting the message that I preach.

The question is not whether you agree or not. The question is whether it is true or not. All too often people like to say I agree, or I disagree, as though you have the right to disagree with God's word. The question is, is it the truth? Is it the truth we are teaching?

III. The adverse outcome of accepting the false teachers (17-20).

- False teachers courted you zealously. Visited them, spoke well of them, praised them perhaps. Aim was to exclude them from blessing of salvation in Christ. To exclude you from what is true. They have ulterior motive. Their concern is not for the glory of God. Their concern is more for themselves.

It is good that you yourself had shown zeal in the past. Show that type of true zeal. Zeal that is for the truth. Be concerned for the propagation of the truth like what you showed in the past. Not in the way that the false teachers are making you to be now. They want you to follow them. They want you to be propagating their brand of the gospel.

Paul by the nature of his work, by his vision for missions, he was constantly reaching out to non believers. And he's encouraging believers to have the same heart, to be zealous in the right way. Instead of being courted by the false teacher. So Paul is not saying that you stop being zealous but be zealous in the right way.

- Sadness in Paul, "My little children" (v19) . Paul was the one who planted the churches in Galatia. Paul preached the gospel. He was teaching them and building up their faith. His desire is for them to mature in Christ, having character of Christ. Involves mind, heart, will. (v20) They need to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ. Paul says I'm laboring again. I'm trying to write to you to explain things. I'm wrestling in my soul. I appear so helpless I can only write this to you and pray for you. My little children, for whom I labor in birth again. Paul wants to see them grow in spiritual maturity. To see Christ formed in them.

V20. Paul said, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone. It's so difficult to put things in writing. You can't see the person's expression. You see, you can't see the tone by which he says it. Much more can be discussed instead of through writing and through writing is so labor is so difficult to express and show everything. . I wish I can be with you now, for I have doubts about you. I'm really at my wits and what to do about you. Apart from writing to you and praying for you. How sad Paul was for them.

- You will end up propagating falsehood rather than truth. The apostle is arguing for them to please turn from error and come back to Christ, come back to the true gospel, and therefore to Christ. Paul is making a plea very powerful plea for them to please don't be drawn away by error. Come back to the truth, come back to the the right way to Jesus Christ himself.

Summary and Application

- Paul the prince of evangelists & prince of pastors. Preachers aspire to be like him. Pray for more. Look at Paul. Not only was he a good evangelist. Winning souls and building up churches, we have to agree that he is the Prince of Evangelists. But there is another aspect of his life which we might overlook. Namely, his pastoral heart. He was not just planting churches to count the number of churches he has planted and take pride in numbers known. His concern for planting churches was to win souls to Christ to make sure that souls are safe

if they are not safe to faith in Christ, they are damned in their sin. His concern was for souls and when souls were saved, he wanted to make sure that they grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He wanted them to be conformed more and more to the image of Jesus Christ. He really had a father's heart to his spiritual children. We must pray for more of such people to be raised up by God

- Know & understand heart of true servant. Concern not himself, but good of others & God's glory. We must know and understand the true heart of a servant of God. Often it is, we think of it as a job to be done. And the job is measured by numbers. The more churches or the more people who attend the church, that is the measure of the success of the person. But you must understand. God's work is different from men's work. Spiritual work is different from secular work. We are dealing with eternal issues. We are not dealing with temporary issues. Therefore ultimately speaking the truth servant of God is concerned for the glory of God, for the salvation of souls. Do not assessment the success of the gospel work wrongly. It is not by numbers. We must have the glory of God uppermost in our mind. We must not look at numbers. Instead we must have compassion for souls, and faithfulness to God. The great commandment is the love of our God with all our mind, all our soul, all our might, and all our strength. And to love others as we love ourselves. That should be the driving force in our life of service for God
- Only one way of salvation, faith in Christ. Leads to freedom, blessedness, living to please God. There is only one way of salvation. That way is in Jesus Christ who died on the cross for his people. Salvation is by faith, by grace to faith in Christ alone. That way alone leads us to true freedom, freedom of fear, freedom of bondage to Do's and Don'ts. Freedom to truly do what is pleasing to God. That is the way the way of justification by faith. So friends, up to now, if you are not converted, if you are still wondering which is the way and you test this teaching and test that teaching you visit this church and that church after all these years of weighing things up. What is your decision? What are you going to do about the truth? If the gospel, the true gospel, is justification by faith. If the true gospel is salvation by grace to faith in Christ alone. What are you waiting for someone. Why don't you come to Christ? Let today be the day when you really turn from your sins and plead to God for mercy. Turn to trust in Christ. Let today be that new beginning for yourself. May God have mercy upon their soul.