

Galatians 4 (Part 2): 8-20 • "Have I Now Become Your Enemy?"

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Galatians chapter 4. As we've been going through the Book of Galatians, there's always great stuff, that hopefully the Lord allows us to pull out from the things that we read, but Galatians is a really simple message. It's like playing one chord on your guitar and never changing.

It has one message, and the one message is Jesus is enough, and we sang about it today. My hope is built on nothing less, and that's Paul's message to the churches in Galatia. What's cool is that we get an opportunity today because we're going to be doing communion today, to walk that out.

And I've been looking forward to this Sunday, believe it or not, because I always appreciate what communion offers for you and I, and that is that opportunity to reconnect with the basic elements of our salvation and to declare, this is it. This is enough, there's nothing else that's needed and so forth. We're going to be doing that.

We're picking up the text here in chapter 4 of Galatians. If you have your Bible, open and then skip down to verse 8. We did the first 7 verses last time, and Paul begins here by saying,

"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those who by nature are not gods." (ESV)

And he's referring primarily to the idol worship that really dominated their lives before coming to Christ. They were pagans. These people were not Jews, they're Gentiles, and they would have believed in a multiplicity of gods. There were gods for everything, and yet, Paul says, you were enslaved to those things because, though, if you know anything about paganism, pagans were constantly trying to appease their gods.

Once in a while, if you find an old grade B movie on TV or somewhere, you might know they used to make movies about weird pagan beliefs, and it would usually end in the beautiful virgin being thrown into the volcano, to appease the whatever god was, and got his nose out of joint.

I admit I haven't seen one of those movies in a long time, but it's that, that was life. It was like, we never know if this, our god is going to be unhappy with us, and if he is, what are we going to do to try to appease him and make him, so he'll bless us. That's slavery. Do you know there's some people who actually have a relationship with God that is very much like that?

Very much like that, with the idea that I've got to do something. If I've got a big decision coming up or a big job possibility, I better go do some, something, I got to be watch myself, cause I want to make sure, that I don't do anything that might cause God to come out against me, and not give me this job that I need so bad, or whatever.

We're always thinking, about, well, not all of us, but it's just this natural thought. Paul says, you were enslaved to those things before you understood grace before you knew grace. The gods that you served, and he goes on to say in verse, 9,

“But now (this is beauty now) that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God (he says) how can you turn back...”

And we'll get into the rest of that verse in just a moment, but I wanted to point out something that Paul says at the beginning of this verse, he says, “...now that ... you know God, or” frankly more importantly, that you are “known by God,” how then can you turn away? Have you ever thought about the difference between knowing God and being known by God?

And if you had to put one of those up as the more important of the two, which one would it be? Well, knowing God is pretty important, because the more you know God, the more you're going to be able to stand against weird doctrine and deceiving spirits and things like that. I get all that, but being known by God is also pretty huge. Jesus told us there's going to come a day when He's going to say to some people, I never knew you. Right?

And so obviously being known by God is critical as well, but as he says here in this verse, now that you are known by God, how is it that you feel the freedom to be able to walk back to these.

And here's what he calls them in verse 9, “...weak and worthless elementary principles of this world, whose slaves you want to be once more?”

We talked last week what that's all about, the weak and worth, worthless elementary principles, and we talked about how we identify that as that idea

behind karma. You get what you deserve. Why would you want to go back and live under you get what you deserve? Which is what it was to live under a pagan sort of an idea.

We're getting what we deserve. If we please our god, then I guess we deserve good things. If we're getting bad stuff, then it's, he's angry at us because we haven't lived the way we should. We haven't pleased him or whatever.

Why would you want to do that? Why would you want to live under that system of complex rules and regulations and all the things that kind of go along with it? Look what, he begins to even describe it in verse 10. He says,

“You observe days and months and seasons and years!”

Isn't that interesting? Now, please understand, the observing of a special day in and of itself, isn't necessarily a wrong thing, because in the New Testament, Paul says, one man considers one day special, another man considers all of them alike. Let each man be convinced in his own mind. (Romans 14:5) Observing a day, it's just saying, hey, this is a day that I, it's just a day of rest, focusing on the Lord, whatever. Nothing wrong with that.

What they were doing was they were being told by these Jewish legalists that they had to keep the law, but not just the law, you guys. It was all that the rabbinical traditions had added to the law. You guys do know that right?

I mean, when Jesus ministered, he confronted the religious leaders because they had added to the law all these traditions that, they just came up with. In fact, we can read about it in the Book of Matthew. I'll put this up on the screen for you. Chapter 15, verses 7 through 9. Look at this. He says,

Mathew 15:7-9 (NIV)

“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain. Their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. (Look at this line) They worship me in vain. Their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

Interesting, huh? You thought that when Jesus came, the religious leaders were just teaching the law. Oh, it was the law and so much more, added line upon line, rule upon rule. They made things like the Sabbath day ridiculous as far as

the keeping of it. I mean, they came up with all these add-ons that just would have made your head spin. I'll be honest with you, it reminds me of some things we can see today among those who would consider themselves to be Christians, or at least in some form of Christianity.

I'll be honest with you, the way they had taken Judaism and added things to it by rabbinical tradition reminds me a lot of Roman Catholicism. I'm sorry if that offends, but the fact of the matter is you look at a lot of the things that Roman Catholics teach and believe, and you're like, where'd that come from?

You might say, well, give me an example, pastor Paul. All right, purgatory, holy water, how about the rosary? How about the keeping of priests from marriage? How about praying to the saints?

I've taught through the entire Bible multiple times. I'm here to tell you those aren't in the Bible. And if they're not in the Bible, where did they come from? They came from men. They came from tradition. They're add-ons, just like the Jews added on to Judaism and made it rules taught by men, and what do all those things do?

Paul says it here in these verses. They enslave us. They don't set us free. They enslave us. They're things we have to serve, and so Paul laments that whole thing in verse 11. Look with me there. He says,

"I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain."

And by the way, if that seems like a fairly strong and sobering statement for Paul to make - it is! It is a very strong and a very sobering thing to say, and when you take verse 11 at face value, which, by the way, a lot of Christians refuse to do, doctrinally.

If you take verse 11 at face value, what you see Paul saying in this verse is if you continue down this path of adding on to the Gospel that I brought you, which was simple and talked about a free gift, and you continue to add rule upon rule and regulation upon regulation and things you must do, I fear that the efforts that I have made to bring you the Gospel of Jesus Christ will have been wasted.

Will have been wasted and yes, that's a strong thing to say, and you know what? In the next chapter, Paul is going to get stronger still about that very thing, and it's something that you and I need to pay attention to. In verse 12, he goes on and he says,

*“Brothers, I entreat you.” (And the word entreat, I know, we don't use that. We use the word urge. I urge you) *become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.* ¹³ *You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first,* ¹⁴ *and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.**

¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth.”

Boy, this is where Paul's letter gets really personal. He starts by telling them, You guys remember why I even stopped in your region, right? I was hurt. I was a hurting number. I mean, I had a physical ailment that I couldn't go on, so I had to stop. And because we stopped, we shared the Gospel with you, and because we shared the Gospel with you, you guys accepted it, and you came to Christ, and you were born again, and you began to show the fruit of that joy and that love.

And Paul says, even though I know that my ailment was a burden to you guys, I know it was a trial. He says, I can testify of your love. You loved me and accepted me so, so powerfully that had you been able, I know you would have given your eyes to me. Which is probably an interesting insight into perhaps what Paul's ailment was, doesn't matter. The point is, he's saying to them, what has become of this blessedness that I saw when I was there?

When you came to know Christ, when you were introduced to grace, and you were so overwhelmed with joy, and so overwhelmed with God's love for you, you just began to pour out that love to me, and I was the recipient of it, and you blessed me beyond words. You would have even given your eyes if you could have. What happened? What happened to your love? What happened to your service that springs from love?

Remember when Jesus was dictating the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor, recorded for us in the Book of Revelation? Putting on the screen here for you from chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, it says,

Revelation 2:4-5 (NIV)

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent. Do the things you did at first.”

“Yet I hold this against you: (he's writing to the church at Ephesus) You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent. Do the things you did at first.”

Show that same level of love and excitement and joy that you started off with. What happened? What happened to your heart? Did it cool? Jesus told us, when the Son of man comes, He said, will the hearts of men grow cold? Will He find the hearts of man that have grown cold in the interim. (Matthew 24:12)

And I love what Paul also wrote to the church of the Thessalonians. Great passage, he says,

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (NIV)

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord.”

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, (and look at this one) your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord.”

In what or in Who? Of course it's in Jesus, in Him. But notice that middle one. *“...your labor prompted by love.”* That's probably where we get our phrase, a labor of love. Your labor, your service, your kindness. It just, you didn't do it because you had to. You did it because you wanted to. Do you know the difference? Sometimes we do feel obligated.

But how beautiful it is when we just love others and show our love for Christ by the love that we show to others and the giving and the serving. Where does that go?

Paul goes on, we're going to go through verse 20. He tells him here, *“They...”* The *“They”* refers to these Jewish legalists who had invaded the church there in Galatia.

“They make much of you, but for no good purpose. (Their goal is that) They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.” That's what they're looking for. They're looking for a reciprocation of their affections toward you which are not genuine.

Verse 18 he says, *“It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, (but then he says) ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!”*

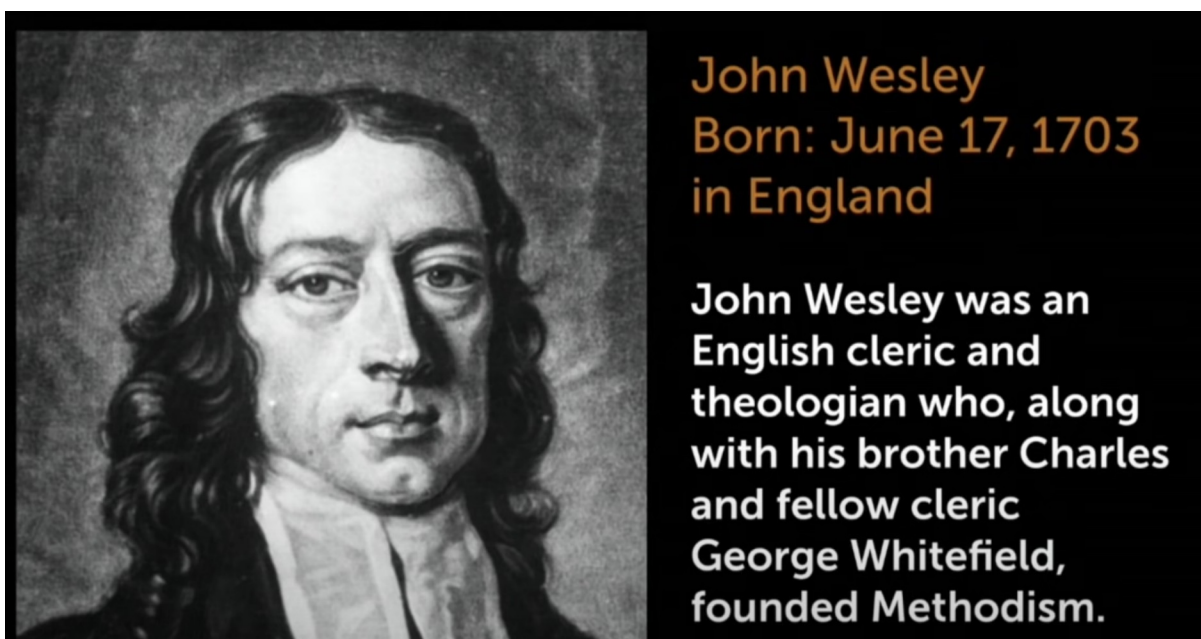
Isn't that interesting that Paul likens his own love and difficulty of seeing what he wants to see manifest in their lives. He likens it to childbirth. He says I'm in the, I'm in the pains of childbirth, the anguish of childbirth until Christ is birthed in you.

And he says in verse 20. *“I wish I could be (with you. I wish I could be) present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.”*

Again, Paul was perplexed because he couldn't imagine these people giving up their freedom for bondage and it was just beyond him because all of us have a choice. We can have a living, vibrant relationship with God that is based solely on the work that Jesus did on the cross or, if you want to, you can have a relationship with God that is based on what you do.

I'm telling you, that's slavery, and you're going to be miserable. And of all the things that we serve, we talked about the idols that we serve. That's the way Paul started this section in verse 8. He's back when you used to serve. There's all kinds of things we serve including religion, and the reason I bring that up is because I want to tell you a little story about a guy by the name of John Wesley.

You guys know who he was? Some of you know your history. I'll put his picture up. It's not a photograph, obviously, because he was born in 1703 in England.



He was an English cleric and a theologian who along with his brother Charles and fellow cleric George Whitefield founded Methodism. And you might say, well, doesn't, shouldn't that say he founded the Methodist church or the Methodist movement? No, because John Wesley never wanted to start a church. That was not his intent.

He simply had a method to his walk with God, and he taught this method and so people began to follow him in the way he did things, and so they were referred to as, Methodists. And they started a church. He didn't want to start a church, and John Wesley was a man who loved the Lord, with all of his heart, regardless of what you may think of the Methodist church today.

I've spent a lot of time in Methodist churches over the years. Yeah, interesting guy, by the way, as a side point, my great grandfather on my mother's side was a Methodist pastor/minister, I guess. And he was one of these circuit rider guys that would go from church to church, and he ministered in Nebraska and Kansas, and I think maybe even one of the Dakotas, anyway.

He was, man, he was a dyed in the wool John Wesley guy, named one of his sons John, one of his sons Wesley. Serious, that's a true story. Alright. I don't know how much you know about this guy. Let me just read a little bit about We'll leave the picture up so you can admire the hair and everything.

John Wesley was the son of a clergyman, and he was a clergyman himself. He was very biblical in his beliefs. He was very faithful in his morality, to the point of even being called a prude and he was full of good works. Here's some of the things he did. He did ministry in prisons. He worked in sweatshops.

If you don't know what that is, that's an old term for factories or places of business that were, had horrific conditions, working conditions and usually children were forced to work there. He did ministry in the slums. He gave food, clothing, and education to slum children. He observed both Saturday and Sunday as the Sabbath. He sailed from England to the American colonies as a missionary. He studied his Bible intensely, prayed, fasted regularly, and gave of his income.

Here's the interesting part. He did all that before he got saved. I'm not kidding. He did all of that and yet he was miserable because he was bound in the chains of his own religious effort. He did it because he wanted to impress God, and so religion became his idol and then John Wesley goes on to tell how eventually he came to trust in Christ only for salvation. And those are his words, by the way. And when he did, John Wesley talks about how he received an inner assurance

that he was now a child of God. Not based on anything he had ever done, but based 100% on what Jesus did for him on the cross, and he was a changed man.

And then, oh man, then he got busy because he didn't have to. He got busy because he loved greatly. Between he and his brother, they wrote more hymns than you can shake a stick at. And the work they did and, oh, goodness gracious. It's just, it'll make your head spin, and I don't need anything to make my head spin. That's an inside thing, but one last passage. You're going to like this. Philippians, chapter 3. Paul writes,

Philippians 3:7-9 (NIV)

... whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

... whatever was to my profit (think about all the things that John Wesley did. Think about John saying this very statement. Whatever was to my profit. All the things that I did, all the goodness, all the prayers, all the fasting, all of it) *I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them* (nothing, less than nothing, I consider them refuse, garbage. The kind of stuff you throw away) *garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found* (just in Him. Not in my or in anything I could do) *not having a righteousness of my own that comes* (by works of the law and deeds of the flesh) *from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

The reason I love that passage so much is, this is the summary of the book of Galatians. This is it right here. If you take Philippians 3, 7 through 9, you say, what is the Book of Galatians all about? Right there, that's it. That's, you could sum up the whole book, not that you should, there's a lot of great stuff in Galatians along the way that we gain from studying through it. But that is the summary right there.

Everything else that was ever on, that I considered to be on the plus side of my life, I consider it all nothing now. That I simply may be found in Him. Here's my question. Are you today found solely in Him? We sang that song this morning. Again, my hope is built on nothing else. Nothing less than Christ and Christ alone, right? What a beautiful truth that sets us free.