

The Gospel in Galatians

Paul's Pastoral Appeal

Lesson #9 for November 26, 2011

Scriptures: Galatians 4:12-20; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12.

1. In Galatians 4:12-20, Paul changed his arguments. Up to that point, he had been using theological arguments which had been carefully thought through. He had been making his case as strongly as possible based on Christian principles including arguments from the Old Testament. Would you call this an emotional appeal?
2. In our passage for study today, Paul turned to a personal appeal. It is an emotional appeal. Think about your own personal experience with Christianity. Are you more attracted by carefully-thought-out, logical, truth-based arguments? Or, are you more attracted by emotional appeals from those who love you and really care about you? Should Christians use both types of appeals?
3. Why would the Judaizers take their time and all the effort to go all the way to Galatia just to oppose Paul's message? What were the motives behind the Judaizing Christians in Galatia? How would you compare their motives with Paul's motives? Remember that in Paul's day, to become a Christian was a risk-taking event. One could be killed for being a Christian. Paul had worked so closely with those he had won to the gospel in many different churches that he had come to love each one of them. Why do people get so motivated by religion. Think of all the wars that have been fought because of religion! Remember that these "Judaizers" were Christians who may still have been Pharisees. (Acts 15:1-5) Why had they become Christians? Were they impressed by the miracles of Jesus? Were they just trying to add more "fire insurance"? They were making it look like Christianity—Paul's simple version—was not adequate to bring one salvation.
4. In this section of Galatians, in effect, Paul was down on his knees begging the Galatians to remember what they learned from him and to think carefully about where they were going with their Christianity. Paul appealed to them as their Christian father. He even suggested that he had become something like a mother to them—giving birth to them in their Christianity. How do mothers react to their newborn children? The newborn's head and face may be distorted by a long labor, but the mother believes the child is beautiful. Is that because of the child's appearance? Or, because of nine months of emotional involvement in the life of that new baby?
5. How concerned do parents become if their very young children are suddenly attacked by a life-threatening illness? Does that describe Paul's pain?
6. Paul's goal for the Galatians was clearly that they become Christ-like. (Galatians 4:19) Do you know any Christians today who are truly Christ-like? (Matthew 5:16)
7. So, how should Christians appeal to their friends, neighbors, and associates to convince them to become Christians? Is the best approach a mix of solid Christian evidence, theological evidence, and at the same time a loving and personal appeal? Very often, emotional appeals are based on personal experience. Was not that the case with Paul?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; Acts 26:28,29 and Galatians 4:12; Matthew 5:16. In some cases, Paul was appealing to Christians in various churches to abandon un-Christ-like behavior and imitate him. But, in Galatians 4:12 and

also in Acts 26:28,29, Paul was asking for something more. What does it mean to become like someone else? Is that more difficult than simply acting like them?

9. Was Paul asking his former converts to undergo a complete paradigm shift and identity change? Isn't that asking a lot? Paul himself had reached the conclusion that everything else is just rubbish. To him, the love, joy, freedom, and salvation he found in Jesus Christ meant everything. There was no question in his mind but that it was worth dying for.
10. We believe that difficult times for Christians are just ahead. How many of the Christians you know would continue living exemplary Christian lives, even reaching out and appealing to others to become Christians, if being a true Christian meant a death sentence? Do our associates see a clear Christian witness in our lives?

The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist. (AA 510.2)

Are we just putting on a show? Are we genuine?

11. In our day, there are many people who like to talk. Talk has become cheap. Words, even pictures, can fly around the world instantly via radio, television, or the Internet. Should we take such talkers seriously? Do we need to see that their behavior matches their talk? Should the lives of politicians and talk-show hosts be made public so we can compare their behavior with their claims and statements?
12. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Compare Acts 17:16-34; 1 Corinthians 8:8-13; Galatians 2:11-14. How do you influence people? Contextualization has become an important idea in missiology. If we really want to reach out to people, we need to understand them as completely and thoroughly as possible in their context. We need to try to understand their thinking so that we can implant Christian ideas into their context. Is it easy to identify the core issues in the gospel and separate them from our own cultural norms? Is it all right to act like a Muslim if you are working for Muslims?
13. In the early days of Christian missionaries, it was almost assumed that adopting a Western European cultural style was somehow equivalent to Christianity. Why do Christians in some parts of Africa think it is necessary to wear a suit and a tie if one is going to preach? How can we become like Paul and focus on what is really important in Christianity without including a lot of unnecessary cultural baggage? Read 1 Corinthians 9:21. What does it mean to obey Christ's law? Is it more important to get people to be Christians? Or, to be Adventists?
14. In our world there is a great deal of talk about compromise. It is an especially sensitive issue in politics. Does compromise have a role in Christianity? Should we embrace the ecumenical movement? How do we decide which parts of our lives are controlled by cultural norms which may not have anything to do with basic Christianity and which parts of our beliefs and behaviors are core Christianity? Which of your beliefs would you be willing to die for?
15. Are our Christian standards subtly being compromised on such subjects as Sabbath observance, dress, even the necessity for Bible study and prayer? Are the mega-churches of our day just some kind of reality show brought into our personal lives? How are churches supposed to compete with the very expensive media events constantly pictured in movies

and on television?

16. Before we attempt to witness to others, must our personal conduct be above reproach? Are our lives being transformed by our relationship with Jesus Christ on a day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month, and year-by-year basis? Would it be correct to say that if our picture of God has not changed over the last year, we are worshipping a graven image?
17. In this portion of the book of Galatians, Paul reminded them of their past experience together. It is impossible to tell from the evidence that we have available to us exactly what happened to Paul while he was among the Galatians. Apparently, he suffered some kind of illness. Various illnesses have been suggested. One possibility is that Paul was suffering from some kind of eye disease. (Galatians 4:13) Is it possible that Paul's eyesight was somehow affected by his experience on the road to Damascus? Was that the "thorn in the flesh" that Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9?
18. We need to remember that it was commonly believed in Paul's day that illness was evidence that one had offended God. (John 9:1,2; Luke 13:1-4)
19. But, instead of rejecting Paul and his message, apparently, the Galatians had taken him in, cared for him, and loved him even more because of his affliction.
20. Why does God allow Christians to suffer? Paul stated simply that he was "always in danger of death for Jesus sake." (2 Corinthians 4:11) In what sense could an affliction be God's messenger to keep us from pride?
21. How often does God use adversity—even sickness, persecution, and poverty—as a means to cut away the unnecessary acts of our lives and get us to focus on what is really important?
22. There has been something of a major religious revival in Africa as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Will some people actually be saved because of this plague?
23. So, what do you think of Paul's emotional appeal to the Galatians? How do you think you would respond to a similar appeal from your favorite pastor? How many Christians—either pastors or lay people—are willing to put it all on the line in order to reach out to others?
24. Read Galatians 4:16-20. Paul was very worried. He remembered the time when he had a very good relationship with his friends in Galatia. Could it be that by telling them the truth he had become an enemy?
25. Sometimes, it is very difficult to speak the truth. Speaking the truth can have very negative connotations in our day. Have you ever had to speak the truth to a business associate or someone who was working for you? Or, even a misbehaving Christian? Was it easy?
26. Ellen White described Jesus like this:

He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, that refused to receive Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness, and sorrow so deep that it broke His heart. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He always bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission

to save. (*Desire of Ages* 353.1)

27. Can we do that? What would that sound like or look like?
28. How do you think this letter was received when it was first read out loud to the members of the church in Galatia? If there were several small home churches in Galatia, how would the news about this letter spread from one to another? What were the Galatians saying about this letter as they passed it along to others?
29. Some people seem to have the ability to speak the truth in love. Are you one of those people?
30. How should we react when we see error creeping into the church? Should we just be spectators? Or, should we get involved? Is it easier to live a life that is obviously different when you are among people of the world or among your fellow Christians? Is it easier for our young people to practice uncompromising Christianity if they are attending schools where the majority of the students are obviously not Christian? Or, when attending a so-called Christian school where compromise is rampant and it is assumed that everyone there is a Christian?
31. Do you think Paul's appeal to the Galatians was successful? How would such an appeal be received in your church?
32. Which do you think would better prepare you for the difficult times at the end of this earth's history? Would it be a religion based on emotional appeals? Or, would it be a religion based on quiet evidence from Scripture?

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Last Modified: October 3, 2011

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