

The Gospel in Galatians

Paul's Pastoral Appeal

Lesson #9 for August 26, 2017

Scriptures: Galatians 4:12-20; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 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 that an intellectual appeal?
2. In our passage for study today, Paul turned to a personal appeal. It was 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? Often, evangelists have used emotional appeals to win converts. However, later evaluation of the results shows that, often, they are not lasting. Paul reminded them of his very personal experience with them.
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? Did they really believe in what they were doing? Read Acts 15:5. There were many of the believers who had come from among the Pharisees. Were the opposers of Paul some of them? What were the motives behind the Judaizing Christians in Galatia? How would you compare their motives with Paul's motives? Were they claiming that by following their ideas, it would have made one a kind of "super saint"? Remember that in Paul's day, to become a Christian was a risk-taking activity. 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!
4. Remember that those 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.
5. In effect, in this section of Galatians, Paul was down on his knees begging the Galatians to remember what they had learned from him and to think carefully about where they were going with their Christianity. The Greek implies he, as their Christian father, was begging them. 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 her 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?
6. How concerned do parents become if their very young children are suddenly attacked by a life-threatening illness? Does that describe what Paul's pain was like?
7. Paul's goal for the Galatians was clearly that they become Christ-like. (Galatians 4:19) That was not just a superficial change. Would it be correct to call that a paradigm shift—a complete change in their way of thinking and acting? Do you know any Christian today who

is truly Christ-like? (Matthew 5:16)

To be a follower of Christ is more than just the profession of faith; it involves a radical transformation into the likeness of Christ. Paul was “not looking for a few minor alterations in the Galatians but for such a transformation that to see them would be to see Christ.”—Leon Morris, *Galatians* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 142; Quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, August 20.

8. 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? If one wants to influence people to his way of thinking, he needs to live what he is teaching.
9. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; Acts 26:28-29; Galatians 4:12; and 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? In what ways was Paul asking the Galatian believers to become like him? Was it more than just behavior?
10. 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 apart from Christianity, everything is just rubbish. (Philippians 3:5-9) 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.
11. We believe that difficult times are just ahead for Christians. 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? Although we have been told that many Christians may be miraculously preserved by God, it will still be a Job-like experience. Would you like to go through a Job-like experience?

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.—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles** 510.2.

Are we just putting on a show? Or, are we genuine?

12. 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?
13. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Compare Acts 17:16-34; 1 Corinthians 8:8-13; and Galatians 2:11-14. How do you influence people? Contextualization has become an important idea in missiology—the study of the methods and purposes of missions. 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 dress and act like a Muslim if you are working for/with Muslims?

14. 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?
15. 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?
16. A former pastor of mine told a story about the time when he was working as newspaper reporter. He was called to investigate and report on a case in which a man went to a pastor's house in the middle of the night. After the pastor went to the door, the man quickly forced his way into the living room, pointed a gun at the pastor, and told him to wake up his family and call them into the living room. After the family had lined up along the wall, he started asking the pastor a series of questions about his Christian beliefs. "Do you believe in God? Do you believe in the second coming of Jesus?" After asking about eight or ten questions like that, he said: "Now we are going to see what you really believe." The intruder then pointed his gun at the side of the pastor's head and said: "I am going to ask you the same questions again, and the first time you say 'yes,' I am going to pull the trigger." Then the intruder asked, "Do you believe in God?" What would you have said? The pastor said, "Yes." The intruder suddenly threw his gun across the room and said: "I didn't think there was anyone left in the world that was really ready to sacrifice his life for what he believed." That newspaper reporter was so moved by the pastor's responses that he later also became a pastor and, later, my pastor.
17. 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?
18. 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?
19. 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?

20. 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) Remember the book of Job.
21. 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.
22. 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?
23. 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? When the day comes that a Sunday law is passed, will you be going from door to door, trying to convince people that they should worship on the Sabbath? That is basically what Paul was doing. Christianity was an illegal religion. Eventually, Paul was beheaded because of his Christianity!
24. 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 that plague?
25. 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?
26. 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?
27. 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?
28. 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.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 353.1.

29. Could we do that? What would that sound like or look like?
30. On one important occasion, Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders known as the Sanhedrin. What do you think of His words to them? Was that an emotional appeal? Was this a time when Jesus had "tears in His voice"?

John 8:44: You are the children of your father, the Devil, and you want to follow your father's desires. From the very beginning he was a murderer and has never been on the side of truth, because there is no truth in him. When he

tells a lie, he is only doing what is natural to him, because he is a liar and the father of all lies.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., John 8:44). New York: American Bible Society.

31. How do you think this letter to the Galatians was received when it was first read aloud to the members of the church in Galatia? Only a few of them could read. Therefore, it had to be read to them. 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?
32. Some people seem to have the ability to speak the truth in love. Are you one of those people?
33. How should we react when we see error creeping into the church? Should we just be spectators? Or, should we get involved? Is being an Adventist a little like riding along on the “Adventist bus”? If the Adventist bus gets a “flat tire,” do we just sit on the bus and complain? Or, do we get out and try to help fix the tire? 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 or even Adventist school where compromise is rampant and it is assumed that everyone there is a Christian?
34. Do you think Paul’s appeal to the Galatians was successful? For sure, it was for some. How would such an appeal be received in your church? Did the Galatians throw out the Judaizers?
35. 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?

They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. **None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great [594] conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men?** The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God’s immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 593.2.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.—*Ibid.** 595.1.

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their

duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.—*Ibid.** 595.2. [Bold type is added.]

36. How many of us depend on what some charismatic preacher has said?

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God.—*Ibid.** 598.2.

37. So, how does all of that relate to emotional appeals? Are emotional appeals commonly used in evangelism? Should they be?

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no [561] stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles** 560.3.

Others fall into a more dangerous error. They are governed by impulse. Their sympathies are stirred, and they regard this flight of feeling as an evidence [287] that they are accepted by God and are converted. But the principles of their life are not changed. The evidences of a genuine work of grace on the heart are to be found not in feeling, but in the life. “By their fruits,” Christ declared, “ye shall know them.” [Matthew 7:16,20]—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 55, 1910**; *Evangelism** 286.4-287.0; *MLT** 314.5; *BLJ** 271.5. [Bible reference in brackets is added.]

38. A lot of people are only moved by emotional appeals. Do popular movies lead us to respond to emotional appeals? Emotional appeals may lead people to join the church. But, then a much harder job must be undertaken: To get them to study the Bible carefully and over a long period of time, preferably with friends, so they can have a deep, settled commitment to the truth. How well are we doing at helping all of our church members in doing that?

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