

Galatians 4:8-11- Christians with Bad Memory

Barnes, Calvin, JFB, TSK, GreekLexicon, Rienecker, Handfuls, Robertson, Poole, PNT, Henry, Family, Clarke, Geneva, Gaebelein, Expositor

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus:

Ever forget the password for your account? Maybe your CRA account? It is frustrating, isn't it? But the long-term consequences are not that bad. **W**

hat about if you forget to turn-off the stove and there is a fire? Those consequences are more severe.

What if you forget your wife's birthday? Those consequences can be even more deadly!

But you will hear today of something more dangerous than forgetting your password, or turning-off the stove, or forgetting your wife's birthday!

Our headings are:

You heard God's message and changed
Your forgot and message and messed-up

Our goals are: **That you will remember you were saved by the grace of God so you will not destroy yourself trying to act as if you were saved by your own actions.**

You Heard God's Message and Changed

8 But then, indeed, when **you did not know God**, you **served those which by nature are not gods**. 9 But now after **you have known God**, or rather are **known by God**

1. Before the Galatians became Christians, they served many things they thought were gods, but they were not the true God.

They did not "know" the true God. They did not have an experiential knowledge (ginosko) but only an intellectual knowledge (oida).

The Galatian church was made up of people from different backgrounds, the largest group being from Celtic origins.

Before the Galatians became Christians, they had many so-called gods...idols, demons, or man-made objects...and they rejected the intellectual knowledge of the true God.

1 Corinthians 10:20 Rather, that the things which **the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God**, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

These gods of these false religions were poor. They brought nothing to the table to help their adherents.

There was **no atonement**. There was **no hope for the future**. There was **no inner peace in this world**. There was **no eternal life**.

There were also Jews in the Galatian church and they were (like the unsaved Celts) enslaved to the elements of their faith: The sacrifices, the ceremonies, and the laws. This is the natural direction of man.

Romans 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

But the Jews were **worse than the Celts because they had a greater history with the true and living God** and yet abandoned him.

And worse than being enslaved to the elements...there are times when the Jews even ignored God and served idols.

2. In the course of time, the Galatians from Gentiles and Jewish backgrounds heard the Gospel and came to know God.

They came to “know” God in an experiential way, (Ginosko) not just in an intellectual (oida) way.

They were in pitch darkness before, but the Gospel light shone of them. They were in the worst imaginable slavery. Then they were freed. They understood their works and worship of pagan gods could not save them, but they received what Christ offered: Salvation by grace through faith. They experienced great hope.

The Great Emancipator came and set them free by paying the full price for their freedom *and told them about it.*

Can you imagine the joy the non-believers received and enjoyed in Jesus Christ?

Yes, they might have been put out of their families or they could have been excluded from the labor unions (guilds), but they knew they could never be excluded from the people of God and his kingdom!

5. More specifically, the Galatian Gentiles and the Jews came to be known by God.

What does that mean?

It meant God knew them first. “Knew” meant “loved.” He loved them before

they loved him.

God loved them and chose them, and called them, and justified them, and adopted them, and sanctified them, and promised to glorify them in the future.

I sought the Lord and afterward I knew...he was the one who sought me first!

Jesus had to come and reveal the Gospel. He is the Word of God. (John 1)

Then the ones who were lost in darkness were redeemed and adopted!

If God, in his love, found and brought the sinner to himself, how is it the redeemed could think that he must work earn his salvation?

6. Lessons:

a. Only Yahweh is to be worshiped. Any religious service done to any other god other than Yahweh is wickedness and the worshiper is under strict condemnation. Don't join them.

b. Those who are not Christians believe they are worshiping the true God but they are not. Other gods are representation of demons, or figments of men's imaginations, or things created by the Yahweh.

It doesn't matter what nice names are put on their gods, they are not real gods.

c. Idolatry (the worship of other gods) is always slavery. There is nothing good in idolatry for you. You have to give but get nothing back in return. Idols don't care about your welfare.

d. You love because God loved you first. You love by doing what he desires. 1 Corinthians 8:3 "*...if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.*"

e. God chose his children in order that they might work. You weren't special, yet he loved you.

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

You Forgot God's Message and Messed-up

9 ...how is it that you turn again to the **weak** and **beggarly elements**, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

1. The Jewish and Gentile converts then forgot the God who “knew” (loved) them and called them to himself and instead ran back to the beggarly gods from which they came.

How could they **abandon** the **kingdom of Christ** to return to the **cesspool of the Devil?**

And consider a word: “Weak” meant their idolatry (of the Celts-idols, or the Jews-rituals) could do nothing to save the sinner trapped in quicksand!

2. It stunned Apostle Paul to see such an absolute turn around to go back to spiritual slavery – by choice!

This was **total madness!** Who could defend such behavior?

The Galatians (Jews and Gentiles) ran back to their superstition and their ceremonies.

They ran back to try to earn to their salvation by keeping the moral law!

They ran back to the primacy of man and ran from the primacy of God.

They wanted to be in charge of their own salvation. They abandoned what they were given!

Ephesians 1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

They wanted to work for that which they could not work. **But these elements were too weak to save.**

10 You observe **days** and months and seasons and years.

3. The Jewish and Gentile converts then evidenced that turn return to their idolatry by starting to observe laws that had passed away.

This was a return to legal bondage to an obsolete law with the hope of earning salvation by it.

Look at some examples:

They kept **special sabbaths**. (Days)

They kept the **Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Ingathering**, etc. (Seasons)

They celebrated **the Year of Jubilee**. (Years)

And yet, know God gives freedom to celebrate certain extra days as long as there is no expectation of salvation. So some still circumcise their sons, and that is fine unless they believe is the sign of the covenant!

Colossians 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

4. But was Apostle Paul worried that all his past efforts were made in vain?

No, he understood the elect could never be lost, but he was making a hypothetical point. He wanted to draw their attention to the foolishness and danger of their actions.

5. Lessons:

a. If you are not liberated by Christ, you are enslaved to the world.

You might look all nicely dressed-up, but you are trapped in a world from which you could never be free.

You might not know you are enslaved, but you are, and no one could set you free, including yourself.

You might want to work for your salvation, but that is impossible.

b. Those who are believers who abandon serving God for salvation by works are in reality leaving the palace of God for the pit of the Devil. They are mad.

c. If it is such grief on a minister, as it was on Apostle Paul, when one abandons the faith to which he was called, imagine what that does the Lord who gave his life for that person!

d. The person who abandons the faith will have to give an answer for this heinous act of rebellion. It is gross wickedness – worse than murder or adultery!

e. God is not against extra-services in the church. (The Jews celebrated other days while in captivity.) So there is nothing wrong in celebrating Thanksgiving.

But Thanksgiving, “Christmas Day,” and “New Year’s Day” are not special services. There are ordinary services. They are additional services. Only the Sabbath services are special.

Keep in mind these feast days, like in the Anglican and Catholic churches can become overbearing.

Conclusion:

The Galatian Christians heard the pure Gospel, believed it, and abandoned their pagan way of life. This new life brought them much joy. But as they soon **started listening to false teachers, so they then forgot they were saved purely by the work of Jesus** and they returned to their past and their gods and tried to earn their salvation by human effort.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. You were saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. He is the only one who could save you and nothing you could do would could save you.

2. Now I don't believe any of you here would go back and worship idols like you may have done in the past, but you can go back and worship other idols – the leading candidate being yourself. We worship half-idols. If you insist on cooperating with God in your salvation, you have made yourself into half-an-idol. If you feel you can't confess your sins to God because they are too bad, you have made yourself into half-an-idol. If you think your children's salvation is based on your human effort, you have made yourself into half-an-idol.

3. Pray for God to humble you so you realize salvation is 100% of the Lord Jesus. Being humble will stop you from trying to take even a small part of the credit for what God did for you.

4. The world is still trapped in sin, shame, and darkness and has no eyes to see the danger they are in. It is for you to pray for God to open their eyes and for you to show them from God's Word the only hope they have in Jesus Christ. Don't leave the spiritually poor in that condition when you are rich with light beyond measure.

Finally: Maybe you never heard salvation – the saving of your soul and getting a renewed body later – is given for free by grace through faith in Christ alone. Hear it again today! You may never hear it again! And then ask God for faith to receive his grace... If you do, you will be saved forever. If you don't, you will be damned forever.