

Galatians 4:17-20 – Recognize the Motives in Preachers

Calvin, TSK, GreekLexicon, Henry, Trapp, Robertson, Poole, PNT, JFB, Handfuls, Geneva, Family, Abbot, Clarke, Eclectic, Gaebelein,
Brothers and Sisters in the Lord Jesus: **Apostle Paul showed the Galatians how much he cared for them.**

They were this **blood brothers in Christ.**

He reminded them how much **they rejoiced when they heard the Gospel** and how much they appreciated that **he brought the Gospel to them.**

They were even **willing to pluck out their eyes** and give it to him if he asked.

So what went wrong?

How come all of a sudden they abandoned what Apostle Paul taught?

How come they were treating him as the enemy?

Worse of all, how come they were attacking the doctrine that salvation came to them by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone?

This is what he explained in the sermon today.

Our headings are:

The Selfish Desires of Evil Preachers

The Selfless Desires of Godly Preachers

Our goals are: **That you will not trust everyone in a nice suit and tie who claims to be a preacher, but you will search out for those who are committed to the Lord and are faithful to his flock.**

The Selfish Desires of Evil Preachers

17 They **zealously court you**, but for **no good**; yes, they **want to exclude you**, that you may **be zealous for them.**

1. These sinister preachers looked like regular preachers and even sounded the same way, but their motives were bad – very bad.

2. What were the motives of these sinister teachers?

These sinister teachers wanted the Galatians to abandon what Apostle Paul said so they could have the Galatians' affections for themselves. (Zealously could be translated jealously.) So they courted them.

It was like a man trying to steal another man's fiancée and lock her up so she couldn't get back to her fiancé.

From the previous verses Apostle Paul remarked how much the Galatians loved him when he first came to them and they embraced him with much zeal, **but now the**

false teachers were showing the Galatians much zeal...but bad zeal.

This was characteristic of the wicked Jewish leaders:

Matthew 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**

18 But it is **good to be zealous in a good thing always**, and **not only when I am present** with you.

3. In order to combat the jealousy of these evil preachers, Apostle Paul warned them to be zealous for good things.

They were not to focus on the charms of false teachers –and not to be distracted by the charms of the false teachers, but they were to be zealous for the good things he had taught them before.

This call to be zealous also applied to him. He pointed out his true love-his zeal for the Galatians.

2 Corinthians 11:2 For **I am jealous for you with godly jealousy**. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

4. The Galatian Christians had to do this even when the Apostle Paul was not present with them.

Isn't that often the case that when someone is absent, affections tend to wane? Out of sight, out of mind!

5. Lessons:

a. Deceitful ministers of the Gospel often start, not with explaining the Gospel, but going after your emotions. They know if you like them personally, it is easier for them to convince you of their false teachings. They can be slick, even charming, but they are deadly. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

b. Deceitful ministers estrange you from your first love – the love of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

They may lure you away with promises of making you more prominent. They may lure you away and make you feel more educated.

They may lure you away and make you feel you are important and consequently steal some of Christ's importance.

They make you part of *their* institution! But don't forget:

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and **has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true**; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

c. Zeal is only good when it is used to pursue that which is good.

Philippians 1:15 **Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife**, and some also from good will: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; **17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.** 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, **Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.**

d. Zeal for the truth must always be constant. Don't be lazy about learning of our Savior.

e. It is not uncommon for the Devil to stir up in people a dislike for their pastor so they could have someone who will tickle their ears instead. ("I don't get anything out of the preaching.")

The Selfless Desires of Godly Preachers

19 My little children, for **whom I labor in birth again** until **Christ is formed in you,**

1. Apostle Paul showed great affections to the Galatians, even with their great error, and he showed it.

They were betraying him, **but his love remained.**

Yes, they said one thing when he was there and another when he wasn't, **but his love remained.**

2. Apostle Paul described himself as a friend, a father, a brother, and now, as a mother.

No one in this world is tenderer than a mother! This was the language of Scripture.

James 1:18 **Of His own will He brought us forth** by the word of truth,

that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Consider what Apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 But **we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother** cherishes her own children.

1 Corinthians 4:15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for **in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.**

He was in great pain because of the Galatians' departure from truth.

3. Apostle Paul wasn't an ordinary mother; he felt he was giving birth a 2nd time to the same child.

Every mother knows the pains of child birth and they would go through it for the good of their child, but who wants to go through childbirth a 2nd time for the same child?

That was what the Galatians needed of Apostle Paul, and like a good mother, he was willing to do it. It was as if he had to lead them to Christ all over again.

4. Apostle Paul calls them his "little children," meaning they needed even more care than growing children.

But there is another insinuation here: The Apostle Paul knew that "little children" are more easily deceived by wicked people and they needed to be guarded more! Consider what Apostle John wrote.

1 John 2:1 **My little children**, these things **I write to you, so that you may not sin.** And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

5. This meant he took the time, patience, and money to be able to care for them and rescue them from the troubles they got themselves into.

20 I **would like to be present** with you now and to **change my tone**; for I have doubts about you.

6. And now Apostle Paul wished he didn't have to take such a sharp tone and give a strong rebuke to the Galatian Christians, but he had to.

They were acting as if they didn't believe. But he knew they did. And he wanted to speak words of encouragement and inspiration instead of rebuking them.

And he wanted to do that personally! A call is better than e-mail. A visit is better than a call.

7. Lessons:

a. A true minister has tender affections for his spiritual children. He focuses on their welfare. He doesn't focus on when his children hurt him, but he looks out for their welfare. He knows they need to be brought to adulthood and they need help to grow up.

b. What is the most common phrase parents use about the child in the womb? "I don't care if it's a boy or a girl, as long as he is healthy."

And isn't that the concern of ministers? It doesn't matter if the Christian is young, old, man, woman, boy, girl, rich, poor, educated, educated, brown, black, or white! He wants his children to be spiritually healthy and would do what he has to for his child!

c. So a minister that is good will always point his children, not to himself, but to Christ who gives them nourishment and strength!

d. A minister always wants to be with his people. Face to face is always better.

2 John 1:12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

e. Nothing worries a minister more than to wonder if his spiritual children really believe – especially when he looks at some of their actions.

Conclusion:

The Galatians were fooled into thinking that the newest, sleekest ministers were the best ones. They did not realize these men were just using them to advance their own influence. They were selfish! Apostle Paul, on the other hand, had to lead them back to the old but true Gospel and the one and only Savior, almost like having to give birth to them twice. He was selfless!

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Be warned: Don't jump on board with the smoothest talker or the best dressed preacher. Listen what he says. Does it line up with the true Gospel – the old Gospel – *the*

full Gospel that could never change? (If it's a "she," run and don't even listen.") A false minister only cares about himself. **If he isn't lining up with the Word of God, run, and drag any others with you that are being deceived.** These men rarely change.

2. Be encouraged: You can find good preachers. Hold on to them and support them. Keep making sure they are faithful to the Scriptures, of course. And daily hold them up in prayers.

3. Be selfless: Share the old, full, and true Gospel. The modern idea of the Gospel might fit in to the modern ideas of "doing church," but you aren't called to "do church."

You are called to live for God and work to advance his kingdom.

Ignore feeding the desires of people and validating them.

Instead, make sure they know of God's holiness, man's sin, and the Savior's substitutionary death!

And do this patiently and consistently.

Anything short of that is short of the mark.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, hear this!

Selfish ministers won't tell you how bad you are, how holy God is, and how much you need the work of Christ.

Selfless ministers will tell you these things! Will you listen to the truth of the selfless ministers so you can be saved from your sins, or do you want to listen to those selfish ministers who will tell you what you want to hear?

The choice you make will determine the rest of your life.