

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Notes by Doug Hamilton

Galatians Part 5) Three Elements of a Successful Appeal to Action

Paul will now make an appeal to the Galatians in light of the foundation that was laid previously. It is necessary to give them one final push before he calls them to action. This appeal to action will come in three phases, the Personal Appeal, the Theological Appeal and the Rational Appeal. It is with these that he will ultimately turn the hearts and minds of the Galatians.

1) Personal Appeal (4:12-20)

Galatians 4:12 "I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*. You have done me no wrong;"

- He will now begin a trip through memory lane and begin the process. He is basically saying that when he came to the Galatians in the beginning, it was not as a Jew, but as a gentile.

Galatians 4:13-14 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; ¹⁴ and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*.

- Apparently Paul was ill upon his arrival to the Galatians. We do not know what that illness was, but it was definitely memorable.
- Perhaps it might be in relation to *2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.*
- It has been proposed by many that when he made the sudden flight to Galatia after landing in Pamphylia in Acts 13, it was because he was ill. This is a malaria ravaged area and often the only relief from it would be the highlands of Galatia. This might also explain why John Mark left them at this location.
- We don't know for sure what the illness was, but it was and the Galatians did not reject Paul in any way over this bodily weakness. They received him and the message that he brought as an angel of God.

Galatians 4:15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

- Many have come to the conclusion that Paul suffered from poor vision, perhaps a remnant of the blindness on the Road to Damascus. Paul did remark at the closing of the letter *Galatians 6:11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.* Their love for Paul at the initial presentation of the gospel was that of a sacrificial nature.

Galatians 4:16-17 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them. ¹⁸ But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

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- Paul reminds them that he has always had a truthful relationship with them, unlike the Judaizers. Paul came to them openly and honestly, but the others came with self-interest. Paul brought the gospel of inclusiveness, but they brought the bad news of exclusiveness through a series of works.

Galatians 4:19-20 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you²⁰ but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

- Just like a mother is naturally fond of her children, so is Paul of the children of God that he brought forth in the gospel of Christ. He is so perplexed on how they have seemingly lost that mutual affection.

Application: When we are faced with trying to make a difficult appeal for action from our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we must first make it personal.

Note: This is where fellowship plays an important role, for without it there cannot be a personal nature in the relationship.

2) Theological Appeal (4:21-31)

Galatians 4:22-24 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.²³ But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.²⁴ This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

- We now enter the section of the Theological Appeal, for we shall view it through the eyes of God. To make this point, Paul reaches back to a very commonly known account of scripture from the Book of Genesis. Abraham was told that he would be the father of many nations. His aged, barren wife Sarah did not believe this and gave him her slave girl Hagar to be a surrogate mother. She had a son with Abraham and called him Ishmael. This was the result of trying to fulfill in the flesh that which was not promised.
- Sarah eventually conceived a child as God promised and she called his name Isaac. She was a free woman with the "Promised Child" and things to be going well; that was until Ishmael started mocking young Isaac. This is what Paul calls an allegory, for they represented two covenants.
- There was something deeper here from the Jewish perspective. The Jewish Rabbis of the day believed each scripture had four meanings:
 - 1) *Peshat*, a simple or literal meaning
 - 2) *Remaz*, a suggested meaning
 - 3) *Derush*, deductive meaning
 - 4) *Sod*, an allegorical meaning
- The first letters of these four words, PRDS, are the consonants of the word *paradise*. When a Rabbi was able to figure out all for meanings of a passage, it was paradise for them. It was with this in mind that Paul the Pharisee is taking on the deeper theology that

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the Judaizers have overlooked. He will use the deepest meaning of all, the allegory. This is when they will use a concrete form to prove a spiritual point.

Galatians 4:25-31 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written, "REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND."

- Ishmael, the son of the slave girl from Arabia, persecuted Isaac the son of the free girl in the Promised Land. In a like manner the Judaizers, the possessors of the Old Covenant of Mount Sinai persecute the Christians, the possessors of true freedom in the covenant anchored in Jerusalem.
- The prophesy of Isaiah 54:1 is true of the Christian covenant. The Christians, the children of the faith set forth by Abraham, are numerous and filled with promise.

Galatians 4: 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN." ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

- Now we see the statement of paradise, **CAST OUT THOSE THAT ARE PERSECUTING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH!** Cut them off because they are trying to destroy the church. They cannot and should not be messing with the inheritance of the LORD! That is a Theological Appeal that should wake them up!

Application: We must be willing and able to make a deep theological point if ever an appeal can be made to the erring.

3) Rational Appeal (5:1-12)

Galatians 5:1-3 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. ² Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

- With the personal appeal and theological appeal in place, it is now time for the Rational Appeal. Paul is trying to make it take root in the Galatians minds.
- They are the FREED ONES because Christ FREED THEM! It is rational that they should become a slave again. It makes no sense to seek to add circumcision of the Law to the covenant of Christ, for that would take the Christ right out of the "Christ"ian because he is obligated to it all. That simply is not rational!

Galatians 5:4-9 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but

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faith working through love.⁷ You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?⁸ This persuasion *did not come* from Him who calls you.⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

- It is not rational to continue on this path of justification by law for it removes faith in Christ. Since Christ does not care whether you have circumcision or not. It is not rational for them to not question those that are leading them astray. This did not come from God, but from sinful man.
- Leaven was commonly referred to in Jewish circles as sin. *1 Corinthians 5:6-8 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?*⁷ *Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.*⁸ *Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*
- It makes no rational sense to continue in the path that they were going.

Galatians 5:10-12 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.¹¹ But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.¹² I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

- In one final thrust, Paul will complete his appeal to their rationale. He makes the assumption that they will do the right thing in light of the judgment that is before them. It simply does not make sense to try and say that Paul ever taught such foolishness.
- Paul states that it is his desire that these pro-circumcision preaching Jews would go all the way and castrate themselves.
- Galatians 5:12 (NIRV) "...I wish they would go the whole way! I wish they would cut off everything that marks them as men!"
- Galatians 5:12 (The Message) Why don't these agitators, obsessive as they are about circumcision, go all the way and castrate themselves!
- It is of interest to know that this region was near Phrygia. The local pagan worship of that area was to a goddess named Cybele. She was a female fertility goddess in whom the most devoted priests would actually castrate themselves and become "eunuchs". This made no sense to the Jews or the Christians when these priests would become eunuchs for a statue of a goddess. It is not rational!

Application: If we are not willing to make a common sense appeal to those that we are trying to make an appeal for change, there will not be success. If it is not rational to them, it is not rational to change.