

## **GALATIANS – Lesson 15**

### **4:8-20 - “Til Christ Is Formed In You”**

**February 16, 2014**

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*8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.*

*12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; 13 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. 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.*

*16 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. 19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In Galatians, Paul is teaching about the importance of living our life by faith and not by self-effort. Specifically in chapter 4, he is teaching about the difference between living our life as a child of God as opposed to being a slave of God.

He will conclude this thread of thought as he finishes chapter 4, which will be next week's lesson. But today's passage we have an interlude in the thought process, which gives us insight into the heart cry of Paul the pastor. Note these passionate comments from today's passage:

#### **A PASTOR'S PASSION**

- v. 11 "I fear for you"
- v. 12 "I beg of you"
- v. 15 "Where then is that sense of blessing you had?"
- v. 16 "So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?"
- v. 19 "My children, with whom I am in labor"
- v. 20 "I am perplexed about you"

You can feel Paul's deep love for these people. You can see his heart "bleeding" in these words. He is perplexed that they seem unwilling to follow after Christ with full devotion.

My, can I relate to his pastor's passion. And so also can pastor Tyler. I wonder if you know how much you, our church family, are in the thoughts and prayers and deliberations of your pastors. Why won't some of you yield your life to Jesus and give Him the Lordship he deserves? And why do others of you struggle with hanging on to sin that defeats you? It might be lack of forgiveness, or lack of commitment, or failure to love or submit as you ought in your family. It might be an unwillingness to let the past go and move on with the future. It might be a propensity for criticism of minutia, or a focus more on self than on others, or a tendency to trust God less and worry more.

Please don't think that we see ourselves as the perfect leaders looking down at the sinful masses from our "ivory towers." We too must deal with our own sinful nature and choices. Yet we are

called to “shepherd” this flock God has given us, and we take that responsibility very seriously, knowing that we will give account. The writer of Hebrews said this:

**Hebrews 13:17** *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

Like Paul in this passage, we “fear” for some of you and are “perplexed” about others. We wonder if the sense of blessing in ministry you once felt has faded. And to others we try to hold accountable, and feel as if we have become more like an enemy than a protector. Neither Tyler or I have ever given physical birth, as have many of you women. But nonetheless we feel spiritual birth labor pains for you as we sense you struggle through battles, until you finally emerge yielding, trusting and clinging to Jesus.

**In this message, I want to share 3 principles or “secrets” about living our Christian life in victory.** And they come from this passage, borne out of Paul’s passion for his people.

## **1. THE ASSURANCE OF BEING KNOWN (v. 8-11)**

**v.9** *But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God*

*“The great and central basis of Christian assurance is not how much our hearts are set of God, but how unshakably His heart is set on us.”*

Timothy Keller (Galatians for You – p. 107)

In verses 8-11 Paul makes the point that before we give our lives over to Jesus, we are slaves to those things that give us purpose and direction, and they are like gods that rule our lives. When we give our life completely to Jesus, we allow Him to be our purpose and direction and He brings freedom from false gods. Yet Paul points out how foolish it is when as Christians, we revert to our former sources of purpose, for we become as slaves all over again. The Galatian Christians were reverting to observe special ceremonial days to give them religious purpose, and Paul is fearing for them. His concern is not that they have lost their salvation, but that they are living a defeated Christian life.

Paul gives a secret to overcoming this folly that might easily be missed. It is in v. 9 where Paul says “now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.” It almost sounds as if Paul is correcting himself. But rather, He is restating the salvation experience from God’s perspective,. Yes, when we “know God” and Jesus for who He is, it can be said that we are saved. This is knowledge that is experiential and supernatural, not just “head knowledge.”

But from God’s perspective, at our salvation He comes to “know us” as a cleansed and forgiven child of His, made righteous by the blood sacrifice of Jesus. Now that’s assurance!

*“Christians who are no longer sure that God loves and accepts them in Jesus, apart from their present spiritual achievements, are subconsciously radically insecure persons, much less secure than non-Christians, because of the constant bulletins they receive from their Christian environment about the holiness of God and the righteousness they are supposed to have. Their insecurity shows itself in pride, a fierce defensive assertion of their own righteousness and defensive criticism of others. They cling desperately to legal, pharisaical righteousness, but envy, jealousy and other ... sin grow out of their fundamental insecurity.”*

Richard Lovelace (Dynamics of Spiritual Life – p. 211-212)

**SO, IT IS OUR INSECURITY REGARDING OUR ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD  
WHICH IS THE REASON WE MAKE IDOLS.**

Others’ approval or even my approval of myself is not ultimately what matters. What matters is

God's assessment and approval. Here is Paul's classic statement on this:

**1 Corinthians 4:3-4** *But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.*

Fanny Crosby wrote: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine – oh what a foretaste of glory divine."

And as true as this is, Paul would remind us that even deeper assurance is found in saying: "blessed assurance, I belong to Jesus!" **THAT IS THE ASSURANCE OF BEING KNOWN** – a "secret" of living a secure and victorious life in Christ.

## **2. THE CONFIDENCE OF DIVINE CONTROL (v. 12-15)**

**v.13** *but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time*

Like the first "secret", this second secret might also be easily missed. Paul relates that his preaching to the Galatians was not something that he had planned. Rather, it was "because of a bodily illness." This seems to indicate that God changed Paul's plans. Perhaps he needed to seek medical attention in the Galatian region, or perhaps his illness made him seek a rest in Galatia that might otherwise have taken him past it. We don't know the details. But we know that God had plans – divine control – even in Paul's illness.

How often we grouse about an illness, or an inconvenience in our well-planned day. And yet when we know the "secret" of being confident in God always working things out for His good we can be **CONFIDENT** that even in our most difficult moments God is in control and might well have a divine purpose for good. There is great victory in knowing that God is in control, even in our most difficult circumstances. For Paul, his illness led to the converting of the Galatians – the beginning of the world being "turned upside down" for Christ!

## **3. THE FREEDOM OF RECEIVING TRUTH (v. 16-20)**

**v. 16** *So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*

Paul's opponents, the "Judaizers" were giving the Galatians what they wanted to hear. "If you just do these things, you will be acceptable to God" they would say. They wanted to be highly respected and followed by the Galatians, rather than wanting the best for the Galatians.

V. 18 tells us that they were "eagerly seeking" the Galatians. This means that they were flattering, rather than holding them accountable.

Paul, rather, was telling the Galatians the truth. And the truth sometimes hurts. When does the truth hurt? Yes, it can hurt because it is given in an unloving fashion or not with the recipient's best in mind. But the truth hurts most **WHEN WE DISAGREE WITH THE TRUTH GIVEN**.

Paul has given the Galatians the truth of the gospel – **FAITH AND FAITH ALONE**. And he is being treated as an enemy – why? Because there is disagreement with the truth given. They are being held accountable rather than being given praise in flattery.

What a powerful verse is Galatians 4:16. It is truly a hidden "secret" of living our Christian life in freedom and victory.

Yes, the truth must always be spoken in love, and must have the pure motive of the best for the recipient. But when truth exposes sin (otherwise called "unhealthy choices") it can often cause enemies, or at least resistance. Flattery might be better received, but it seldom if ever brings about more righteous behavior and a deeper walk with Jesus.

It is the TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE and it is TRUTH that this pulpit that we Oaks pastors must bring to help you better live your life in victory.

I hope that you seek for the message of God's Word to CHALLENGE you and sometimes make you UNCOMFORTABLE – if it points you to a closer walk with Jesus. TRUTH challenges. TRUTH is often uncomfortable, for we fall short of it. But TRUTH sets free!

**CONCLUSION** And at Oaks Bible Church may we ever have the PASTOR'S PASSION for one another to teach

- 1. THE ASSURANCE OF BEING KNOWN**
- 2. THE CONFIDENCE OF DIVINE CONTROL**
- 3. THE FREEDOM OF RECEIVING TRUTH**

**Amen!**