

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

"Poverty of a Works System"

Galatians 4:8-11

Introduction

1. The infinite grace of God is clearly read in this chapter (vv. 1-7). Salvation from one's sin is only possible by a divine intervention. That's plain unadulterated grace! God's eternal riches at Christ's expense. Amen!

2. Grace is surely evident in the two-fold use of the verb "sent forth" (vv. 4, 7). Both usages are of the same double prefixed verb stem. The two prefixed prepositions indicate that God's Son was sent out "from" and so was the Holy Spirit. By virtue of the first (v. 4), redemption and adoption are accomplished. By virtue of the second (v. 7) sonship and heirship. What incredible spiritual facts!

3. Once an individual has entered into these privileges, in Christ, it is small wonder that he should require an appeal not to abandon them! But that is just the case with this text--it is a forthright appeal to appreciate one's privileges and avoid a relapse into bondage. The appeal is directed to the Galatians in three concerns:-

1. THEIR CONVERSION vv. 8, 9

This concern relates to two factors:-

a. Ignorance of God v. 8

The adversative particle at the beginning of this verse notes a strong contrast between their former and present states. The use of "ye" suggests Gentiles and not Jews.

The verb "know" here indicates no basic knowledge of God (cf. 1 Thess. 4:5; 2 Thess. 1:8 for same verb). There was no historical saving knowledge of God. They did not have innate knowledge of God. What was needed was an approval of God and therefore an acknowledgment of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 4:8 for this other verb to know). Look what happened to men by their rebellion against God (Rom. 1:19, 10; 1:21; Psa. 19:1; Eph. 4:18).

By virtue of this horrible lack of knowledge, "slavery" to what were not gods nor ever could be gods resulted. The situation was hopeless!

b. Known by God v. 9

Here is the result of conversion. It is in contrast with "at that time" (v. 8). The temporal participle "after ye have known God" is action which precedes the main verb "turn." By using the passive voice of the verb "to know" and providing the Agent "by God," Scripture teaches that knowing God is not due to one's personal initiative alone, but to divine intervention. It is the operation of the Holy Spirit which results in eternal life (cf. John 16:7-11; 2 Pet. 1:4; John 17:1-3).

NOTE: There is little comfort here for those who deny the actual salvation of the Galatians. They are true believers.

2. THEIR TEMPTATION vv. 9, 10

The particle "how" raises three questions like this: "how is it that"

a. Ye are turning v. 9

The present tense of the verb and the prefixed preposition indicates process and a turning "back" (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9; Gal. 1:6). The turning is related to rudiments (i.e. elementary principles) which are 1) weak i.e. powerless to produce results and 2) beggarly i.e. powerless to enrich. Think of it: they were turning to something which was an incurable inefficiency to meet the needs of a lost soul and bridge the yawning gap between man and God!

b. Ye desire again v. 9

The verb desire is really "to will" (cf. John 5:40; 7:17). Consider! They want to be in bondage again! The word "again" is better "anew" same as in (Luke 1:3, Acts 26:5, John 3:3, 7). Thus, no longer servitude to idols, but to the law. Same old bondage, but a different master.

c. Ye observe v. 10

This verb is a strengthened form of the verb "to keep." It should be translated "observe carefully." The middle voice and present tense notes "studiously observe" and indicates a scrupulous attention so that no prescribed season would be overlooked. It is a dreadful form of legalism. "Days" means the weekly Sabbath, "months" is the new moon; "seasons" notes the annual feasts and "years" marks the "Sabbatic" and Jubilee years. **Note:** A careful study of Romans 14 and Col. 2:16 is required to get a fuller picture on Christian liberty as opposed to legalism.

3. THEIR EVANGELIZATION v. 11

This is the final concern of the Apostle Paul regarding the Galatian believers. He expresses:

a. Fear

Here is a statement regarding Paul's deep interest in the believers and his sense of their great danger. So he writes, by inspiration, "I am apprehensive about you." Let's not think Paul to be a detached servant of God! He was close to those to whom he had witnessed.

b. Failure

The alternative to the Galatians standing for the truth of the Gospel is utter apostolic failure! Paul's labor is never questioned--he worked hard to see the Galatians saved. The question now is--were they to remain loyal to what they learned at the beginning? If not, he worked (perfect tense) in vain (i.e. to no purpose, it was all a mistake cf. 3:4).

Conclusion

What is more sad then to see someone turn from the perfection of Christ to some additive or substitute? God give us boldness to stand for perfection in Christ! Amen.