

STUDIES IN GALATIANS

Study #8: Galatians 4:12-20

“You Were Running Well” (Until You Got the P.B.A. Disease) Pretty Bad Attitude

You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Got the P.B.A. Disease
(Pretty Bad Attitude) – Galatians 4:12-20

Key verse 5:7 — “You were running well; who cut in on you that
you should not obey the truth?”

Father, thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word tonight. I just pray that Your Spirit would use Your Word in our lives and that we’d be refreshed and encouraged. Thank You so much for the book of Galatians and for the heart that wrote it in the power of the Spirit. Thank you for Paul and for his resilience, his transparency, and above all his deep affection for these Galatian Christians. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

I get tickled about some of the stuff that’s written about Christians and their giving habits. This one was fun.

(The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 Other Stories by Charles R. Swindoll)

A CHURCH BOARD DECIDED that people in the congregation were embarrassed when the offering plates were passed. So they thought they ought to have a new system that wouldn't embarrass anybody, especially those who couldn't give. They asked the pastor to design a way of handling it so people could give as they came in or went out. So he built several interesting boxes and put them at each door. But these boxes were different. If you dropped in a dollar or more, it made no noise, it was silent. If you have a half dollar, a little bell tingled. If you gave a quarter, it blew a whistle. If you gave a dime, a siren went off. If you gave a nickel, a shot sounded. If you gave nothing, it took your picture!

—Clyde Murdock, *A Treasury of Humor*

(p. 388)

Erwin Lutzer wrote a book called:

(When You've Been Wronged: Moving From Bitterness to Forgiveness by Erwin W. Lutzer)

. . . God's sovereign control. A two-year-old child in a stroller was rapidly turning his little steering wheel to the right, but he was going to the left, nonetheless. His direction was not determined by him, but by his mother; his steering wheel was not connected to anything that mattered. (p. 90)

I think sometimes an illustration like that helps us realize that

God is sovereign and in control.

In back of all of this study today, you've got to realize that Paul has got a broken heart. He is really, really hurt. And it's basically the Galatians had just literally forsaken him, in the sense of being overwhelmed by the Judaizing teachers and gone their way. And he feels very badly.

If you'll remember the last verse that we looked at last week, he was saying in verse 11, "everything that I've done for you probably has been to a loss or to no gain at all.

Now, the way we look at the book of Galatians, we're looking at it:

You Were Running Well UNTIL: Who Cut in on You that You Should Not Obey the Truth.

Galatians 5:7, that's our key verse.

Now every study flows out of that key verse. If you do an inductive study, you do the whole book and then you pick one key verse, and then everything builds on that in the outline.

1. You Were Running Well UNTIL: No Runs, No Hits and a Big Error.

You have a twisted Gospel and a troubled mind. That was the way he analyzed them in the first study.

2. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Forgot What God was Doing in Your Life.

And he told his testimony of how dramatically his life was changed on the Damascus road and what God did.

3. You Were Running Well UNTIL: Divine Direction was Not Discerned (chapter 2:1-10).

You'll remember that was the whole issue of the Jews wanting the Gentiles, when they became Christians, to observe certain parts of the Law. And so Paul takes Titus, a Gentile Christian, along with Barnabas and they go to the Jerusalem council. And they're extended the right hand of fellowship. And basically, as part of his argument, "look at what the mother church did for us."

They recognize that Peter was preaching the gospel to the Jews and it's the same message that I'm preaching to the Gentiles. So that was a word of affirmation.

You Were Running Well UNTIL: Divine Direction was Not Discerned.

There is the issue.

4. You Were Running Well UNTIL: Peer Pressure Postponed Progress.

If you'll remember, in that scene Peter is so curious about

what's going on with the Gentile Christians in Antioch that he has to take the trip 360 miles north from Jerusalem to check it out.

When he gets there, this is after the council now. When he gets there are probably 500 or 600 people in the dining room eating the meal. And Peter goes in and sits down with the Gentiles, which Jews just didn't do. And then all of a sudden some guys from Jerusalem came. Peter got up, left the Gentile table and went over and sat with the Jews. Paul got up and literally torched him right in the audience.

But here's Peter again. "Same song, second verse. A little bit louder and a whole lot worse,"—in the sense that he denied the Lord at the critical time of the crucifixion. And he is, once again, denying the Gentiles the right to salvation and acceptance into the body of Christ.

That was a powerful study just because you could feel for Peter and how much he must've wept and hurt over that because he'd influence Barnabas. And it could very well be that the relationship between Barnabas and Paul was so strained that Barnabas just did not go on that second trip. All that stuff could have been seething underneath and created the problem.

5. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said "I Do It Myself."

Galatians chapter 3, and that's the flesh instead of the Spirit producing the godliness in our lives.

6. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions.

The purpose of the Law and why it was given in [Galatians] 3:15-29.

Now that was part 1. I just gave you those so you can tell where we are.

7. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Didn't Graduate (last week).

Now, do you remember what that was?

We are born into His family. At the very moment of our new birth, we also adopted into His family. And all that means is that we've got an inheritance to look forward to. An inheritance undefiled, reserved in heaven for us.

And what a joy to recognize that when we come to church—when we meet believers—we're meeting people of our family. We are brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

He wants them to understand that. And it's just no little deal to go on and add to the Law and to forsake the family relationship.

What a powerful, powerful message.

Now, we'll quit preaching and go to meddling' okay.

8. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Got the P.B.A. Disease (Pretty Bad Attitude).

It's amazing to me isn't it? And to you too.

Living among Christians. How a pretty bad attitude can sure spoil an awful lot of good fellowship and good things that otherwise would be flourishing if the attitudes were right. And so we're going to look at verses 12-20.

Remember, this is not Paul mad. This is Paul so passionate and so burdened for the salvation of these Gentile Christians that they don't get sidetracked into performance rather than the relationship. And so it's emotion. It is not anger that is here in the picture at all.

Tim Hensel wrote a book called:

(Eating Problems for Breakfast: A Simple, Creative Approach to Solving Any Problem by Tim Hensel)

With the right attitude all the problems in the world will not make you a failure. With the wrong at mental attitude, all the help in the world will not make you a success. (Warren Deaton)

[Describing one friend, he said:]

He was the sort of man who would go after Moby Dick with a row boat, a harpoon, and a jar of tartar sauce. (p. 22)

[There are people like that.]

We humans have the capacity to distort almost anything. Consider the following paraphrased portion of a well-known verse in Psalm 34 (the Hansel version): “O come let us magnify our problems together. Let us talk about them until they become impossible.” We magnify our problems by doubt, anxiety, worry, procrastination, and self-preoccupation. How many times have you heard someone say, “My problems are worse than anyone else’s.” (p. 30)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

[Remember] “By perseverance the snail reached the ark.”

I think what we’re going to be doing today is just really being honest about how discouraging it is, in ministry and in circumstances and relationships, when people change their attitude toward you. And you really don’t know why.

Paul knows why here and he’s going to spell it out for them. But it still doesn’t take away the hurt and the pain and suffering because of what these Galatian Christians are doing.

You know, it’s awfully easy for us, too, when we get into difficulty, to magnify them to the point that we really get a distorted view.

Remember Elijah? Elijah faced, on Mount Carmel, all the priests of Baal. And fire came down and there was a great victory, but Jezebel sent that telegram to him when he got back to Jezreel saying "I'm going to kill you by tomorrow morning." And he fled to Beersheba in the South, went out into the desert. He basically wanted to turn in his prophets badge and ended up over in a cave.

Then you finally get the real story when the Lord says: "Why are you here?" He says "I only am left and they're trying to kill me." And then just before the Lord and him leave the cave, remember what the Lord said? "Oh by the way, Elijah, your statistics are a little out of sort. There are 7,000 that have not bowed their knees to Baal.

You see what things do to us when we're exhausted or when we're discouraged? These things just pile in and they create the circumstances that are a backdrop for the study.

Has there been anybody else who's had problems along that line? The saddest picture of all in the scripture is the picture of Paul in 2 Timothy 4. Have you ever read that?

2 Timothy 4:16-17

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the

lion's mouth.

You have just got to say, coming down the final stretch of his life—he's just a few months before he will be executed—and he's writing to Timothy. You would think that the Lord would be a little bit easier on him than that then for him to be all alone and to have to face this.

But is that any different than Jesus Christ on the final night that He's here on earth all by Himself, then hanging on the cross hearing “Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani!”—“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

Yes, he was all alone. He tread the wine-press of God's wrath all by himself. So he does know and he does understand.

I started looking for scriptural illustrations of what Paul's experiencing. One of them, the first one that came to my mind was Genesis chapter 4.

Cain and Abel were born. And you'll remember, it all centered around a sacrifice. Cain brought a fruit of the ground and God rejected it. Cain got mad because Abel's offering was accepted. And so his whole attitude toward his brother changes and he murders him out in the field. Just that quickly, the hatred was there.

Probably the greatest illustration of it—there are others we could use like Philemon and Onesimus, Saul and David, Eudocias and Syntyche, and Paul and Barnabas (because of

that rift that they had between them)—but probably the greatest one is Jacob.

You'll remember that after he served close to 20 years with Laban, we read in Genesis 31, listen to what he says:

Genesis 31:1-2 (NIV)

Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying. "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.

There was just something that changed. There was something that was really bothering him. And then when you read that from the New Living [Translation], it's a little more graphic.

Genesis 31:1-2 (NLT)

But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were grumbling about him. "Jacob has robbed our father of everything!" they said. "He has gained all his wealth at our father's expense." And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban's attitude toward him.

And the picture causes him to make the decision to leave and to go back. And the Lord affirms that decision, by the way.

Listen to *Our Daily Bread*.

“...Lord, I am scattered, restless, and only half here.”
(February 2, 2011)

Isn't that a great prayer? Sometimes you feel that way when life is overwhelming you. And there's Paul.

Our last verse that we looked at in [Galatians] chapter 4 and verse 11 last week, let me read it:

“I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.”

The Message said:

“I am afraid that all my hard work among you has gone up in a puff of smoke.”

If you could really put yourself in his shoes today, his heart is breaking in the verses that you're getting ready to read.

You know, sometimes it just takes a real struggle with the Lord to open our eyes so that we can see reality.

An awesome book is Mary Beth Chapman's book *Choosing to See*.

Mary Beth and Steve lost their little adopted Chinese daughter, five-year-old, backed over by an SUV of their oldest son in the driveway. And they're writing—Mary Beth is trying to write “choosing to see.” In other words, I've been blinded by all of this and the grief and the anger. I want you to just hear a little snippet because we ourselves can be blinded to reality and fail to see.

(Choosing to See: A Journey of Struggle and Hope by Mary Beth Chapman with Ellen Vaughn)

Steven looked down at Maria's table. There was a piece of notebook paper there. Maria had drawn a six-petaled flower with a green stem and two leaves. Only one of the petals was colored in. Blue. Maria's favorite color. The center of the flower was orange.

Steven saw something bleeding through from the other side of the paper. He turned it over. Maria had colored an orange butterfly, and written a word she'd never, ever put down on paper before.

Maria could write her name and little things such as “I love you,” but she hadn't started writing other words yet. Since Stevey Joy was a little older and a year ahead of Maria in preschool, she had a list of words to learn. Steven's best guess is that Maria must have copied one of the words off the list.

And the word she wrote was SEE.
SEE.

Staring at Maria's artwork, Steven had tears spilling down his face. It was like Maria was speaking to him from heaven,

from the very realm of eternity, saying “SEE? Can you *SEE*? Everything is going to be all right. I am here with Jesus. I am fine. Heaven is real, the gospel is true, you just have to SEE!” (p. 157)

You see, the problem we have is we’re so blinded by pride and selfishness that we don’t see. We don’t really see the issues. And as a result, attitudes change toward us or we change in attitude toward others. And all that strain brings about division, heartache and heartbreak. And Paul is right there today and he ministers to us with his broken heart.

Now, that was a long introduction wasn’t it? It was to get you up to speed.

v. 12 Become as I am, Because I also became as you were brethren. I am begging you, you did me no wrong.

Now, we’re going to look at it a verse at a time and I’ll be done right on schedule.

“Become as I am, Because I also became as you were brethren. I am begging you, you did me no wrong.”

Now, “you did me no wrong.” This is not an interpersonal problem. This is a theological problem and affects your eternal destiny by the decision you’re going to make with regard to the Mosaic Law and the salvation by grace through faith.

“Become as I am.” Paul is telling them: “I am free from the

Law. I am a Jew who received Jesus Christ and I'm no longer under Law. I have a relationship with Him. I want you to become as I am."

"Because I also became as you were brethren." Gentiles never knew the Law. They never had that as part of their background. So he said "I became like you were. When you received Christ as Savior and you too were free from the Law, but now you've gone back under it."

Notice he uses the word "brethren." That word means "from the same womb." So this is not an issue of interpersonal things. It hasn't grown that far yet. But they are from the same family.

In last week's study, "sons and daughters together." The command: "Become as I am. Once I was blind but now I see."

"I am begging you, you did me no wrong."

It's not personal. It's your eternal destiny.

Isn't it hard sometimes to accept reality right at the time when you know you've really blown it and you've wondered if there's any way to redeem it?

Listen to Drew Brees' from his book, *Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity*. I love his teachability and his brokenness. And I can see why he's such a powerful leader.

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry)

Finally defensive end Warren “Ike” Moore came up to me. He was a senior, too, and a guy who really didn’t get a lot of playing time. But he was a well-respected, quiet leader on the team. He put his arm around me and said something I’ll never forget.

“You broke it. Now go out and fix it.”

For some reason that made sense. It had been my mistake, but I had time to make up for that mistake. Instead of kicking myself or replaying the interception, I focused on the task at hand. One thing you learn quickly is that great quarterbacks must have short-term memories when it comes to things like this. Good or bad, you have to be able to finish a play, push it aside, and move on to the next one. You can never let a play from the past affect the present. Your job is to play in the moment. (p. 26)

I’m just saying, I wish there were Christians that were like that. As brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, you wouldn’t have these changed attitudes because of so many differences of opinion.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon)

There is no more blessed way of living than a life of dependence upon a covenant-keeping God. We have no care, for He careth

for us; we have no troubles, because we cast our burdens upon the Lord. (p. 491)

Listen to Oswald Chambers:

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

The lasting value of our public service for God is measured by the depth of the intimacy of our private times of fellowship and oneness with Him. (January 6)

Oh, what a treasure. Paul just says “I wish you would just accept this. I wish you would really realize how much I love you.”

v. 13 But you know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you the former time.

“But you know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you the former time.”

On this missionary journey he is going to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. All these are cities in southern Galatia.

And he is afflicted with something. We believe it's eye disease because in [Galatians] chapter 6 he's going to say “Look how big the letters are that I write with.”

In 2 Corinthians 12 he says: “Lord, I've asked you three times to deliver me from this thorn in the flesh.” And the Lord said

“No.”

I think, in my heart of hearts, that his sight was never the same after the Damascus Road after he saw the Lord.

The Lord sometimes when He really confronts us with issues, leaves us with a reminder that will be with us for the rest of our lives.

Remember Jacob? I mean, when God threw his hip out in that wrestling match, the next scene he is limping back to camp. You can hear the kids saying, “Well it looks like daddy but he sure doesn’t walk like daddy.”

And where’s the last scene you see him? There is standing, leaning on the top of his staff, worshipping the Lord in Beersheba before he goes down into Egypt for the last 17 years of his life.

God, lots of times, leaves the mark behind of those times of resistance or disobedience or arrogance or pride or whatever. And I think with Paul this is probably the case. He was stricken with some kind of an affliction.

Now, what that affliction did made him have to stay in Galatia. And you don’t make him stay anywhere without preaching the Gospel. I mean, he turned it into a ministry opportunity in these three cities.

You remember also he was stoned in Lystra and they thought

he was dead. So it was not a comfortable ministry that he had with the Galatians at all.

Listen to Peterson paraphrase this because he kind of opens it up.

Galatians 4:13 (Peterson)

You did not come down on me personally. You were well aware that the reason I ended up preaching to you was that I was physically broken, and so, prevented from continuing my journey, I was forced to stop with you. That is how I came to preach to you.

It became a divine appointment simply because “I was not able to go on anyway further, and so I therefore stop with you.”

Now, Did Paul have victory over that? Boy, you just need to read 2 Corinthians chapter 4. It is so beautiful.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NASB)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Don't you love it! I mean, he's having a hard time with these Galatian folks but he's letting you know that he's not sitting around having a pity party.

Joni Eareckson Tada is exactly the same way. Thirty-eye years, 39 years now, in a wheelchair.

(A Lifetime of Wisdom: Embracing the Way God Heals You by Joni Eareckson Tada)

I'm reminded of a little poem from one of my favorite books.

*Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
the falling of a tear;
the upward glancing of an eye,
when none but God is near*

My friend Margaret Clarkson, now with the Lord, penned those words. And that bit of verse summarizes so much of what I learned from this godly woman

Margaret was a missionary in Canada who wrote many wonderful poems—and virtually each one was born out of her life of severe and chronic physical pain. The last time I was with Margaret was at Ontario Bible College. We spent lunchtime together talking, me in my wheelchair, and she lying on her side on a cot. She was in so much pain she simply could not stand up for any length of time. As a result, Margaret taught me many lessons about praying through pain. (p. 106)

She forgot to say that Margaret wrote the greatest missionary hymn that has ever been written:

So send I you to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing
So send I you to toil for Me alone.

You know, there are some great saints you're going to meet. It's going to be a wonderful day when we're with them around the throne. Of what God has done in their lives and the fragrance of their lives still goes on today.

Notice what Paul says in verse 14:

v. 14 And your trial in my flesh you did not despise nor loathe, but as a messenger of God you received me, as Christ Jesus.

You understand the problem now when you get to verse 14.

“And your trial in my flesh, you did not despise nor loathe, but as a messenger of God you received me, as Christ Jesus.”

Man! You talk about rolling out the welcome mat. This is sovereign intervention that you got sick! Here you are preaching the gospel to us and we're responding and we're receiving Christ as Savior. And the Lord is doing a wonderful work among us! You didn't despise the fact that my eyes were runny or my face was ugly because of the affliction that I was

having. But you treated me like I was a messenger of God. Even you showed so much love, it was like Christ.

That word “loathe,” you didn’t loathe means to spit at. When they were repulsed by something they spit at it.

And you didn’t do that! You treated me in such an incredible, positive way. And so much fruit was born by being there.

Warren Wiersbe is a pastor to pastors. In his book he says:

(Be Free: Galatians by Warren Wiersbe)

To them, he was an angel of God. It is a wonderful thing when people accept God’s servants not because of their outward appearance but because they represent the Lord and bring His message. (p. 98)

Spurgeon said:

(Lectures to My Students by C. H. Spurgeon)

Know you not that many of the promises are written with invisible ink, and must be held to the fire of affliction before the letters will show themselves? Tried spirits are grand instructors for ministers. [Don says “for those in ministry” instead of “ministers”.] (p. 214)

You know, I get tickled sometimes reading John Ortberg’s stuff because, in ministry he’s still got a great sense of humor.

(Faith & Doubt by John Ortberg)

When a subject comes before a king, he kneels down. He is acknowledging that he is the presence of his master. When a believer—in any religion—prays to his god, he kneels down. He is acknowledging that he is in the presence of his master. When a young man asks a woman to marry him, he gets down on one knee. He is acknowledging that he is in the presence of his master. (p. 68)

Question, verse 15:

v. 15 Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness. For I am bearing witness to you that if possible you would have dug out your own eyes and given them to me.

“Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness.”

See how his heart is broken? They’ve changed their attitudes toward him.

“For I am bearing witness to you that if possible you would have dug out your own eyes and given them to me.”

You have gone blind if it would be possible.

“That is how deeply you cared” is how Peterson paraphrases that last phrase. “You wanted to alleviate me of all of this difficulty.”

Now, there are going to be two questions. There’s going to be one here and then there’s going to be one in our key verse. They are the key to understanding how he’s dealing with a personal matter here.

Question #1 is in verse 15.

Question #1:

“Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness.”

What has made you change your mind? What has made you forget our love in the relationship we once had together? I ask myself that question. Why do things change with us? Why do our attitudes change? Well, one of them is “dull of hearing.” You hear it so much you almost can predict what the guy is going to say and so you get a callous in your ear. You don’t hear like you heard in the beginning. You have a calloused heart.

Callous is a heart that is rubbed and rubbed and not soft and tender.

Or a carnal mind. Thinking of fleshly issues rather than spiritual issues.

Stifled affections.

Lukewarm emotions.

And you know as well as I do that Paul would tell you, these young men who are coming in and adding the Law are so young and they're so convincing. And they just seem so reasonable. And that's the way that you've wreaked havoc in the Galatian churches and the reason for the letter.

Paul is just saying, where is it? You can't have two declarations of blessedness I guess so your affections have been won over by these false teachers. Physically, emotionally and spiritually—this is what has happened to them.

How do you maintain your declaration of blessedness? You're in the Word every day, aren't you? You fellowshiping with Him, getting to know Him better and better and better.

Now, here comes our key verse.

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

Second question, verse 16.

Question #2:

“So then [RESULT] have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

You know, the truth hits and it hurts sometimes. And

oftentimes, because you're the vessel or the one doing it (the teaching it), you take all the flack for the negative response. And Paul is just saying, "have I become your enemy" because I took time to tell you truth and to bring the truth to you in this situation?

Paul certainly didn't hit and run, did he? He was faithful.

Ephesians 4:15 (NASB)

But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,

You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Got the P.B.A. Disease—the Pretty Bad Attitude.

They had a change of attitude because they could not receive the truth. They are different from Peter back in Galatians chapter 2. At least he responded to what Paul had admonished him to do, even though he was embarrassed in the circumstances that were before him.

"So then have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

Now, when you get to verse 17, he starts to talk about the Judaizing teachers. You've got the word "they" now. And so, these are the unnamed perpetrators of the strife and the division in Galatia and he doesn't mention their names.

**v. 17 They are eagerly desiring you but not rightly,
desiring to shut you out in order that you might be
seeking them.**

“They are eagerly desiring you but not rightly, [they are] desiring to shut you out [PURPOSE] in order that you might be seeking them.”

These heretical teachers will go to any length to flatter you. And what they’re doing, their motives are rotten. They want to “shut you out” from the free world that you’re enjoying in Christ, “in order that you might be seeking them.” They had a strategy. They’ll shut you out. You won’t be able to get in unless you—do these things.

So therefore, you’re excluded. And you really don’t want to be excluded, do you? You want to be in. So in order to be in, you need to come our way.

Martin Luther said:

Satan’s satellites often soft-soap the people.
(source unknown)

And that is the picture that’s described here of these false teachers. They are shutting them out, “in order that you might be seeking them.”

Listen to Revelation chapter 3 on the church at Laodicea, the graphic contrast between the end of that epistle—do you

remember the end of that letter? Where's Jesus? He's outside the door of the Laodicean church, knocking and wanting to get in.

Revelation 3:20

‘Behold, I am standing at the door and knocking; if any man would hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and he with Me.

False teachers on the other side want to shut you out so that you observe, you perform, you do these legalistic things and that equates your salvation. Sometimes the timing that the Lord has in curriculum really speaks to your heart to the contrast.

Now, Paul wants them to understand that he's not jealous. That's verse 18.

v. 18 But it is good to be desired eagerly in a good thing always and not only when I am present with you.

“But it is good to be desired eagerly in a good thing always and not only when I am present with you.”

It's not just that I'm the only one that God would use in your lives. I'm just wanting you to know that it's okay to be desired by someone in a right way because I certainly was doing that. I had your best interest at stake when I was there. And I still do. I haven't changed in that regard.

And isn't that a graphic verse, verse 19.

v. 19 My little children of whom again I am experiencing the pains of birth until which time Christ should be formed in you.

“My little children”—well they were brethren back in the first verse and now they're little babies in Christ and they really are *nēpios*. They're just children. They came to know Christ when Paul was there on a prior occasion.

“My little children of whom again I am experiencing the pains of birth until which time Christ should be formed in you.”

Peterson paraphrases that:

Do you know how I feel right now, and will feel until Christ's life becomes visible in your lives? Like a mother in the pain of childbirth.

He said, I am hurting badly and “my little children” I wish that you would be those who reflect the in-living Christ.

Listen to a statement by Ian Thomas. I don't know if you've read any of his books—*The Saving Life of Christ* and *The Mystery of Godliness*.

Ian Thomas said:

Our lives are like an empty glove and when Christ comes in, He forms Himself within us and activates our total being. The only thing that limits Him is our availability. He wants to give us His strength for our weakness, His wisdom for our folly, His drive for our drift, His love for our lust, His grace for our greed, His joy for our jealousy, His peace for our problems, His courage for our fears. (source unknown)

Totally adequate! You don't need the Law! You need the indwelling Christ taking over, being available for Him to live out His life in us.

The best illustration of that scripturally is Mary. If you will remember, in Luke 1:38 this is what Mary said:

Luke 1:38

And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Now think about it. Mary could have said "I'm engaged. You know, these plans that you have are going to ruin my reputation. Who's going to believe that a virgin has a baby? And what's my family going to think?"

And you can just go down a litany of excuses why. But what does she say? It's total availability. She simply is willing to say:

“Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word.”

Is there something for us tonight about showing up for work every morning and being available to let Him, through our times in the Word, impress upon us how our lives need to be lived on that given day that comes before us? Total availability.

These Galatians had a pretty bad attitude. And that’s the picture that’s described in the passage.

Once again, Mary Beth Chapman, *Choosing to See*:

Once I was blind but now I can see.

Samuel Rutherford wrote a great little book called *The Loveliness of Christ*. And you just treasure every statement.

(*The Loveliness of Christ: Extracts from the Letters of Samuel Rutherford* selected by Ellen S. Lister)

I know no sweeter way to heaven, than through free grace and hard trials together, and none of these cannot well want for another.

Christ should be our night song and our morning song.
(p. 75)

He is everything to us.

Joni [Eareckson Tada] says, when she became quadriplegic in 1972. Her daddy would come every morning and he would always whisper the same thing with wet eyes:

(365 Days of Hope: Encouragement for Those Facing Loss, Pain, and Disappointment by Joni Eareckson Tada and Dave & Jan Dravecky)

In the early days of my injury my father would come to the hospital every day and whisper to me with wet eyes, “In every day and in every way, you’re getting better and better and better.” He’d say it every time he came.

But my body never did shake off the paralysis. The pragmatist would say, “See, your father’s words were wishful thinking. You didn’t get better, Joni; instead you got stuck with a wheelchair.”

That’s not the way I choose to look at it. Daddy was right. Every day I did get better. Maybe not on the outside but on the inside. My soul became settled. My hope became clear. This is the sort of healing described here: “Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.” God is interested in healing the inside of a person. For me, a healed and happy heart is the best “better.” By a long shot.

Joni Eareckson Tada

(June 20)

That's the proper attitude toward suffering and hurt. So she's singing, isn't she?

Jesus I am resting, resting,
In the joy of what Thou art.
I am finding out the greatness
Of Thy loving heart.

Now, look at our last verse, verse 20.

You've been so good tonight. You've acted like you're wide awake and refreshed and you've helped my spirit tonight.

v. 20 Moreover, I was longing to be present with you at this moment and could change my tone (voice), because I am perplexed (at a loss) about you.

“Moreover, I was longing to be present with you.” You see what happens when you really care about somebody? You want to be with them. And there he's concluding the letter.

“at this moment and could change my tone (voice), because [frankly] I am perplexed (at a loss) about you.”

“Oh, I wish that I could be with you” Peterson says. “Then I wouldn't be reduced to this blunt, letter-writing language out of sheer frustration.”

I long to be there.

Remember what he said back in verse 11: “I’m at a loss.”

Now: “I am perplexed.” I really hurt. I’m at wits end. I just am so concerned about your condition.

There are a few statements I think that would be helpful to us.

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada)

Jesus, you are my confidence! I invite your Spirit to kick the props out from under me if I lean on my appearance, abilities, or achievements. (September 5)

George McDonald said:

(Knowing the Heart of God by George McDonald)

The first thing in all progress is to leave something behind [to make that statement]. (p. 116)

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon)

Nearness to God brings likeness to God. The more you see God the more of God will be seen in you. 1725.334 (p. 66)

And Oswald Chambers:

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

If you are going through a time of discouragement, there is a time of great personal growth ahead. (October 13)

Don't you love that anticipation? If you're going through a difficult time now, there's a time of great personal growth ahead.

Now, if you'll notice on your sheets you've got 10 lessons that come out of that meditation. The tenth one is really the one I want you to think about.

Lesson #10: Is Christ daily being formed in you?

Or is a Pretty Bad Attitude making you have to face the fact that:

You Were Running Well.

And you're not doing too well right now.

Max Lucado says this:

(Life Lessons: Galatians by Max Lucado)

Father, thank you for the astounding promise that we will be changed. I pray that I might cooperate fully with the nudgings and promptings of your Spirit today. Give me eyes that see, and a will that yields to your sometimes painful transforming work (p. 79)

You Were Running Well. May God grant, if this is true that we've got a pretty bad attitude, that it would come from:

some bitterness in our hearts,

some feeling of resentment,

some drift from the truth, or

some guilty feelings.

May the Spirit of God convict and speak in a mature manner that these things might be dealt with, in order that you can be back in the race again, making progress on the track of life to the ultimate formation of Jesus Christ within you.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NASB)

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes

short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.

I've chosen to end this study with just some short little prayers. These are prayers from Eugene Peterson and also there is one from Joni Eareckson Tada again.

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)

Dear God, I know you didn't choose me without having, also, some purpose for me. Show me what you have in mind—the tasks, the blessings, the acts of love that you have for me, in Jesus's name. Amen. (p. 349)

God, I don't want to go through my life always looking for easy, painless paths. I want to find the true way, and the straight path. I know you will give me strength to accept whatever difficulties I meet and bring me to a full life of jealous fellowship with you. Amen. (p. 359)

Root, O God, my life deeply in your redeeming work so that the words that casually and accidentally come from my mouth will be words of praise and exclamations of trust. Amen. (p. 122)

And then Joni:

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada)

Father God, I thank you for the unique way you have provided for me, showing me your tender love through the years. Help me to keep my eyes focused on Jesus, rather than comparing myself to others.

(September 6)

Father, with the blind man in John chapter 9, our only testimony can be “once I was blind but now I see.” Lord, Satan creates havoc in our lives after we become believers by these ugly acts of the flesh, blinding us to reality, changing our attitudes toward one another and not living in a way that would bring You pleasure and honor, and above all, blotting out the reality, the radiance, the beauty of Christ living in our individual lives. Father, please Father, please teach us. Help us to feel as deeply as Paul did about the Galatians tonight and help us to be involved in constructively suggesting things that can be helpful. Thank you that we’ve seen his heart in a new way tonight. And the pain and the hurt of the rejection that he’s faced there. Thank you that he hit hard with truth and he stayed by the course. Help us to do the same. Therefore, my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. For as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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STUDY NUMBER EIGHT – UNTIL: YOU GOT THE P.B.A. DISEASE (PRETTY BAD ATTITUDE) – GALATIANS 4:12-20

KEY VERSE 4:16

v. 12 Become as I am, Because I also became as you were brethren. I am begging you, you did me no wrong.

v. 13 But you know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you the former time.

v. 14 And your trial in my flesh you did not despise nor loathe, but as a messenger of God you received me, as Christ Jesus.

v. 15 Where is therefore your declaration of blessedness. For I am bearing witness to you that if possible you would have dug out your own eyes and given them to me.

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

v. 17 They are eagerly desiring you but not rightly, desiring to shut you out in order that you might be seeking them.

v. 18 But it is good to be desired eagerly in a good thing always and not only when I am present with you.

v. 19 My little children of whom again I am experiencing the pains of birth until which time Christ should be formed in you.

v. 20 Moreover, I was longing to be present with you at this moment and could change my tone (voice), because I am perplexed (at a loss) about you.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Galatians 4:12-20 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Paul command them to do in verse 12?

3. What do you think Paul means by the term “infirmity of the flesh” in verse 13?

4. What was their original attitude toward the apostle, according to verses 14 & 15?

5. Why do you think they had a change of attitude toward the apostle, according to verse 16?

6. Describe the technique of the false teachers in verse 17.

7. What is the apostle's desire for them, according to verse 19?

8. Summarize in your own words his desires in verse 20.

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: It is always good for us to be sensitive and to listen to the exhortations of our Christian brothers and sisters.

LESSON #2: Paul describes his witness in 1 Corinthians 9:20: “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law” (NASB).

LESSON #3: Paul says his strategy is described in 1 Corinthians 9:22: “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (NASB).

LESSON #4: Paul did not let his infirmity in the flesh stand in the way of his effective ministry to others.

LESSON #5: Paul knew that an effective, fruitful witness is that because of who he is and what he does more than what he has to say.

LESSON #6: Time and circumstances often change attitudes.

LESSON #7: The Lord often uses our weaknesses to display His glory.

LESSON #8: You run the risk of rejection when you speak the truth in relationships.

LESSON #9: Beware of false teachers who are trying to get you under their spell.

LESSON #10: Is Christ daily being formed in you?