

Galatians 4:12-20

Introduction: This section indicates the tender interpersonal relationship Paul had with the Galatians. God reveals the humanness of both Paul and the Galatians. It is an emotionally charged passage. You will remember that this letter did not begin with the customary expression of gratitude to God for them.

Paul identifies with the Galatians—4:12

- 1) How does Paul recognize them? *brothers*,
 - a) cf. 1:11; 3:15; 4:28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 19
 - b) Remember that there are false-brothers—2:4
- 2) What does Paul do? ¹² *I beg* [pres. mid. ind. δέομαι] *you^{pl}*,
 - a) Don't let my fears (cf. 4:11) come to fruition
- 3) What does Paul want from them? *become* [pres. dep. impv. γίνομαι] *like me*,
 - This is the first command in the book that calls for action on their part.
 - a) Like Paul how? Live Gentilely (cf. 2:14) in reference to the freedom he has been granted in Christ, and not in subjection to the Law.
 - b) Remain loyal to the truth of the Gospel.
- 4) Why? Because Paul identifies with them—*because* [ὅτι] *I am like you^{pl}*.

Next, Paul evaluates his undeserved yet warm reception by the Galatians—4:12b-14

- 1) Negatively—gentle assurance that the Galatians did not harm Paul—*You^{pl} have done me no wrong* [aor. act. ind. ἀδικέω],
 - a) ¹³ *but you^{pl} know that because of a physical incapacity I formerly preached the gospel* [aor. mid. ind. εὐαγγελίζω] *to you^{pl}*.
 - i) Some unknown illness.
 - b) Cf. Acts 13:14-14:23
- 2) Positively—gentle reminder that the Galatians embraced Paul—¹⁴ *And my testing* [πειρασμός] *that was in my flesh* (my physical incapacity) *you^{pl} did not despise or loathe* (spit out),
 - a) *but you^{pl} welcomed* [aor. dep. ind. δέχομαι] *me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus*.
- 3) You could have found me unacceptable, but you did not. Everyone knows a sick man is rarely impressive. (Kent)

Paul then asks the Galatians “What changed?”—4:15-16

- 1) They previously had an attitude of self-sacrifice—¹⁵ *What happened to your^{pl} (sense of) blessedness?*
 - a) *For I testify about you^{pl} that if possible, you^{pl} would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me*.
 - b) You used to think my ministry among you was a blessed thing and you were willing to sacrifice for me. What changed your opinion of me?
- 2) Question # 2—¹⁶ *So then, have I become* [pf. act. ind. γίνομαι] *your^{pl} enemy by telling you^{pl} the truth* [pres. act. ptc. ἀληθεύω]? (cf. Ephesians 4:15)

- a) Rather than treating Paul with affection and with a willingness to listen to him as they had during his first ministry among them, he had now become unacceptable to them. Why? How is this possible?
- b) Many times the truth may be painful, but it is the most valuable thing someone can give us. Telling people something pleasant may be what they want to hear, but it may ultimately be disastrous. (Kent)

Paul wisely compares the false teachers with himself—4:17-18

- 1) The selfish actions and motives of the false teachers—4:17
 - a) Feigned interest—¹⁷ *They seek* [pres. act. ind. ζηλώω] *you^{pl}, but not honorably* [καλῶς]; (cf. Proverbs 27:6)
 - i) It is easy to be impressed by the façade of the false teacher.
 - a) Feigned exclusion—*they desire* [pres. act. ind. θέλω] *to shut you^{pl} out* [aor. act. inf. ἐκκλείω] *so that you^{pl} will seek* [pres. act. subj. ζηλω] *them*.
- 2) Paul's own actions and motives—4:18
 - a) Mere interest in someone is not wrong—¹⁸ *But it is commendable* [καλός] *to be sought* [pres. pass. inf. ζηλώω] *in a commendable* [καλός] *way always*,
 - i) *and not only when I am present* [pres. act. inf. παρειμι] *with* [πρός] *you^{pl}*.

Lastly, Paul explains his ministry and his heart's desire—4:19-20

- 1) Paul's tenderness toward them—4:19a ¹⁹ *My little children* [τεκνίον],
 - a) The most endearing term used previously was “brothers” in 1:11: 3:15
- 2) Paul's ministry among them—4:19b
 - a) Intense—*for whom I am again undergoing birth pains* [pres. act. ind. ὠδίνω],
 - i) The pain of labor was considered the most severe pain any human could experience
 - b) Deliberate—*until Christ is formed* [aor. pass. subj. μορφόω] *in* [ἐν] *you^{pl}*.
 - i) Essential conformity, not just external conformity. It is outward appearance that properly represents the inward nature.
 - ii) The reality of one's spiritual birth is demonstrated as Christ's character takes shape in one's life.
- 3) Paul's desire—4:20 ²⁰ *I desire* [impf. act. ind. θέλω] ... (cf. 4:17)
 - a) To do what?
 - i) *to be present* [pres. act. inf. παρειμι] *with* [πρός] *you^{pl} now*,
 - ii) *and to change* [aor. act. inf. ἀλλάσσω] *my tone*,
 - b) Why? *because* [ὅτι] *I am perplexed* [ἀπορέω] *about* [ἐν] *you^{pl}*.
 - i) To be at his wits' end; to be confused; to be uncertain as to which way to turn; to be at an impasse; to be puzzled; indicating serious anxiety and concern.

Take-home truth: Both shepherd and flock must focus on God to have the Biblically appropriate relationship described here.