

Series: Galatians  
Title: The Good Zeal  
Text: Gal 4: 12-19  
Date: January , 2021  
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**Galatians 4: 12: Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all. 13: Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14: And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus. 15: Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16: Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? 17: They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. 18 But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in a good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you. 19: My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, 20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.**

God the Father sent his Son to unite his elect to him and to one another in Christ—he shall not fail! Ephesians 1: 10 declares that the eternal purpose of God is that “*in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather TOGETHER in ONE all things IN CHRIST, [the things are his people] both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even IN HIM.*” The Lord Jesus came to gather his people in ONE, EVEN IN HIM, IN “the unity of the faith”—and he shall not fail!

Christ accomplished that work upon the cross by his blood. *Christ finished the transgression*—the transgression of Adam is finished for God’s elect by Christ. *Christ made an end of sins* for his people so that God never again remembers our sins. *Christ made reconciliation for the iniquity* of his people—he made atonement for us; Christ made peace for us with God. *Christ brought in everlasting righteousness* for his people—the one and only righteousness of the believer is by Christ’s obedience on our behalf. *Christ sealed up the vision and prophecy*—he fulfilled all that was written. *Christ is anointed the most Holy*—himself, the holiest in heaven, and in the new heart of his people. Christ made his elect—Jew and Gentile—one and now he is making us one by one Spirit by one calling by one gospel.

Ephesians 2: 14: For he is our peace, who hath made BOTH ONE, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, *so* making peace; 16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in ONE BODY BY THE CROSS, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by ONE Spirit unto the Father.

That is our purpose for being in this earth: as the Head of his church, Christ is using us to preach him—as he calls his redeemed into “*the unity of the faith.*”

Ephesians 4: 11: And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14: That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: 16: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Yet, in the churches in Galatia we see division, not unity. But there are some things we must remember.

One, behind the legalists being used was the devil. The devil is the divider, the sower of discord, the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10). The devil’s mission is to turn believers from Christ. His desire is to exclude us and divide us from Christ and one another. Christ said, “*He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him*” (Jn 8: 44).

Also, remember, Christ our Head was ruling everything that took place in Galatia. He is doing the same now in his churches, in the hearts of his people, over the devil, and in the hearts every enemy. The same as Christ permitted the devil to afflict Job, Christ permitted the devil to enter Galatia to try his people, to teach us that Christ alone is our Head, our salvation, our unifier!

**Proposition:** By his gospel by his Spirit, Christ creates good zeal in the heart of his people, uniting us and making us seek unity through the gospel. We see in Paul “The Good Zeal.”

## THE GOOD ZEAL IN PAUL’S PLEA

**Galatians 4: 12: Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.**

Paul did not use his authority as an apostle. Instead, he pleaded with them using the gospel of Christ—“*Brethren, I beseech you...*” Doing so loved them. He loved them by not using his apostolic power but instead turning them to Christ through the gospel.

*Be as I am for I am as ye are.* Paul would have them be as he was in turning from the law to Christ alone, for Paul was now as the Gentiles were in that they had never been under the old covenant law. In the past Paul had been under the bondage of the law which they were now needlessly putting themselves under.

Philippians 3: 4: Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6: Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7: But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

But by God’s grace, Paul was now as the Gentiles were, that is, free from the law and under the grace of God’s everlasting covenant robed in Christ’s righteousness through faith in him.

Philippians 3: 8: Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Paul desired the Galatian believers to count all their works loss that they might be found only in Christ’s righteousness through faith in him.

*Ye have not injured me at all.* Truth is, turning from Christ to anything else only hurts ourselves. But he wanted them to know that he knew it was not them he wrestled against. They were being turned to treat Paul as an enemy by questioning his apostleship. But he wanted them to know he loved them as he had from the beginning. Paul knew he was wrestling against the devil, spiritual wickedness. Always remember that, brethren.

Ephesians 6: 12: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

## THE GOOD ZEAL OF UNITY AT CONVERSION

**Galatians 4: 13: Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14: And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15:...for I bear you record, that, if *it had been possible*, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.**

We see the good zeal in the unity Christ created between them through the gospel at the first. Christ uses earthen vessels. The apostle Paul was a sinner saved by God’s grace, (Paul said, of whom I am chief), with many infirmities. Paul was like the brethren at Galatia. He was not impressive. His bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. By secular historical accounts, Paul was frail, bent, and stuttered when he preached.

But God chose to use such vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Notice how God's power made them receive Paul. He said, "*my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*"

1 Thessalonians 2:13: For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it not as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Christ creates the good zeal. What is the difference between good and bad zeal? Good zeal turns us to Christ alone away from all else. Bad zeal turns men from Christ to anything else. Paul said, "*ye received me as an angel of God, even Christ himself...for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*" Some say Paul's thorn in the flesh was bad eyesight. But the point is that the Spirit of God worked so effectually in their hearts that he made them receive Paul as *an angel of God*.

Romans 10:15...How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Isaiah 52: 5: Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day *is* blasphemed. 6: Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, *it is* I. 7: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

The good zeal is by the Spirit of Christ publishing peace in our heart, in spirit, revealing Christ is God who reigneth! He reigned putting away our sin, making us the righteousness of God in him. He reigned irresistibly regenerating us and calling us to faith and love in him. He reigns working all things together for our good, according to his purpose.

Notice, what this good zeal made them do. It made them overlook Paul's infirmities and failures because they delighted in the gospel of Christ. Christ made them willing to suffer hurt to their own selves for Paul, for the sake of Christ. By creating a thirst and hunger for the gospel of Christ they were willing to suffer loss of their most needed things for the sake of Christ and his gospel. They were willing to deny themselves for Christ and their brethren.

Christ unifies us in the bond of his blood and love by his Spirit. That is the good zeal. It is true, heart zeal which turns our hearts to Christ above, away from things below, for Christ to have the glory. It is charitable zeal which works in love and care as a nurse cherisheth her children; as a physician setting broken bones in sinners and needy brethren. It is humble zeal which made David say, "Who am I, O Lord God?"; Paul said, "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (2 Sam 7: 18; 1 Cor 15: 10). It is universal, consistent, constant zeal, which is not partial, not hot today cold tomorrow then lukewarm. It is discreet zeal which is not out for vain glory but prefers to overlook, to bear burdens, to not injure, to esteem brethren better. It is unifying zeal! That is good zeal which is of the Spirit of Christ!

## **THE BAD ZEAL**

**Galatians 4: 16: Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? 17: They zealously affect you, *but not well*; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.**

Bad zeal is of the devil. Notice, Paul says, "*This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you*" (Gal 5:8). Bad zeal turns from Christ, divides and excludes—"They zealously affect you, *but not well*; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them." They turned these believers from Christ to rudimentary things: to the letter of the law, to their sin, to Paul's infirmities and faults. They tried to exclude the brethren from Paul, exclude them from the gospel and exclude them from Christ. Their purpose was that it might affect them. They desired to create followers and give themselves cause to glory in what they made those brethren in Galatia do. So long as men peaceably sat under the gospel it mattered not to Paul how they

objected to him. We are not trying to exclude sinners but include them that they might hear and believe Christ. It was only when men attempted to disrupt the unity of the church that they had to be excluded.

**Illustration:** The pastor and the sower

## **THE GOOD ZEAL MINISTERS MORE EARNESTLY**

**Galatians 4: 19: My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, 20: I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.**

In the face of all, the good zeal makes us minister that much more, depending that much more upon Christ alone. Paul loved them as his own children. He hurt for them as his own children. He longed for them as his own children. Therefore, he travailed for them with painful labor like child birth.

But Paul did it depending upon the Spirit alone. He was seeking the only cure—“*until Christ be formed in you.*” Only the Spirit can renew us inwardly. Only the Spirit can make us put on the new man and put off the old. He does it by forming Christ in our new heart afresh. That is the bond of our unity. Christ in you is the scarlet line that binds us together inseparably in Christ.

We can be sure that that is what he shall do because Christ and his Father have seen the travail of his soul and he is satisfied. He promises to regenerate and never cease renewing our inward man day-by-day. Christ promises to never leave us nor forsake us. It is because Christ in you is the hope of glory.

Brethren look away from all things below to Christ above and behold Christ victorious! He purchased us with his own blood so he shall have his purchased possession. He has all power and rules all things for us. Christ has justified us and made us the righteousness of God so his holiness demands he not let one perish. We are his body, the fulness of him, therefore he shall fill all in all. Set your affection on Christ our Life “*casting all your care on him, for he careth for you!*”

When the devil would seek to turn us from Christ let this be our word to one another, “Look to Christ alone!” As the Lord told them in the wilderness, “Look and live!” That is the word and the earnest expectation of the good zeal.

**Amen!**