

11. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.
- 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.

Prologue: As we have seen before, there those among the Galatians, who said that union with Christ is not enough—that believers must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to become perfect. In this they rejected the Gospel of grace that Paul preached, and this is the meaning for the letter that Paul has written. The passage before us, which I read a few minutes ago is a highly emotional passage, and we must hear it carefully. Paul reveals his heart here, and is almost beside himself with the love that he feels for the church of the Galatians. Calvin says, “The complaint of a father so perplexed by the misconduct of his sons, that he looks around him for advice, and knows not to what hand to turn.” He wishes to be present with them, to “change his voice” so as to be understood. He feels handicapped by writing letters from a distance, and would like to be present with them, so that could understand his meaning by the inflections and nuances of his spoken voice, which can convey more meaning than the written page. He wishes he could use all the skills of a careful communicator, so that they might fully understand what is before them. But let us look at the words:

- I. Paul gives himself as an example of what a good minister is: vs. 12-15
 - a. Paul claims that his emotion is not from personal rejection. His motives are pure. He has changed his voice in this passage that begins at verse 12. He is entreating them now, and not rebuking them. Ever means of persuasion he is willing to use, without, of course compromising the truth in Christ. It is not good to come from bitterness or anger, as if those who oppose the doctrine are opposing us. Ministers are servants of the people, and must always have their welfare in mind.
 - b. He prays that they would have the same good will toward him as he has toward them. They once had such a view of him. There is no agreement to what is meant by “infirmity of the flesh,” except that it was something that would have worked against Paul being accepted because of his appearance. He was not a handsome, fine specimen of a man. His power was in the Spirit of God, not in the gifts of the flesh that some had. But they had loved him for the message he preached, and accepted him as a true messenger from God. They rejoiced in Paul, because of his message. As he would have sacrificed all for them; so they would have sacrificed all for him.
 - c. How wonderful is the true ministry of the Gospel. True ministers have been sent forth by God Himself to preach and teach the truth. Malachi says that they are messengers of the Lord of Host. Illustration: One of the downsides of the First Great Awakening in America was the degrading of the regular ministry. It was an indirect result of the popularity of Whitefield. He was immensely popular and made almost into an idol. In fact, when the Revolutionary Armies attacked Canada, during the Revolutionary War, they dug up the bones of Whitefield to take with them, for they thought that they would bring good luck to their enterprise. The bones didn’t

Because of the popularity of Whitefield a great many other preachers and itinerate evangelists tried to emulate him and began to preach from town to town in the colonies. They were often ignorant and badly educated people and replace careful study of the Bible with emotion and exhortation. The regular ministry opposed them, and they in turn opposed the regular ministry. There was plenty of fault on both sides, but America has always had a distrust of the regular ministry since that time. There is a bias against education for the ministry, against doctrine, and against order in American churches.

In the same way a terrible thing that severed the bond between the Galatians and the apostle.

- II. They looked upon Paul now as an enemy—his only offence was to tell them the truth. Vs. 15-18 What had happened to make them think of Paul as their enemy.?
 - a. Their joy and blessedness was gone, as I pointed out last week. They had no joy in Christ, for they had turned from Him to ceremonies and good works as a ground for their blessedness. Blessedness from God does not come because

- of men’s works, but because of the free gift of God. Abraham was blessed before he had done anything before God. Isaac was blessed before he was born; as was Jacob. The bible is clear: eternal blessedness from God, which is life and righteousness, does not come from men’s works, but by the promise of God, as we read in Galatians 3:21. Life and righteousness was the true inheritance of Abraham, and life and righteousness comes only from God by promise.
- b. Vs. 17 is a little bit of a trouble to understand, but if we take it in contrast with vs. 16, I think the meaning will be clear.
 - i. Paul has become their enemy [in their minds] because he told them the truth. The change had not taken place in Paul, but in them. They had departed from the truth in Christ, and they did not have the same love and regard for the truth that they once had had.
 - ii. In contrast, those who had brought in these corrupt doctrines, were very zealous and energetic, and this had had an effect upon the people. They had a great influence in Galatia, but it was not for the good.
 - iii. They were not zealous for the truth, however, but had an ax to grind. They wanted the Galatians to become their disciples, and therefore they wanted to cut them off from the Apostle Paul and attach them to their own party. This is what is meant in the phrases: “They would exclude you [from Paul]; in order to affect them [attach them to their own party.]”
 - iv. Paul uses a very strong word in verse 18. “Jealousy.” There is a comparison made here, as Calvin says, between the pure love of marriage, and the corruption of marriage by infidelity. An honorable wife may be jealous of the affections of her husband, and be deeply grieved if he is unfaithful. By the same token, the defiled mistress may have a like affection for the same man. Both may have a very strong jealousy for the same man, but one affection is honorable and right and just, and the other misdirected and perverse.

In the modern day, jealousy is uniformly said to be wrong, and great injustice is done to the marriage vow and the holy and honorable union which is described in Scripture.

Paul says that he is actuated by true jealousy for them, and it is right that he have this emotion, because his heart and motive is pure. Paul is not acting for himself, but for Christ, whose messenger he is. He has no selfish ambition; they on the other hand would bring them into bondage, so that they might glory in their flesh, as he says later. Paul would unite them to Christ; they would unite them to themselves. The difference is not always easy to see, but the true minister will tell you the truth, even if you do not want to hear it.

- III. This brings us to the third thing: What was Paul’s heart and passion? To have Christ formed in them. Vs. 19. The goal of the Christian ministry is that Christ be formed in us. Paul, in a very tender passage, uses the metaphor of childbirth.
 - a. “My little children,” is a most tender expression, which expresses his love for them. He has changed his voice, and would treat them without rebuke but with the most tender and kindly attitude. It is the first time he has used this expression in this book.
 - b. It was like Paul had to be in labor all over again. He had travailed before over them, as a mother brings forth a child, and it distresses him that he must do it again. The care of the churches was a great burden upon Paul, for he really cared about them, and not just to have a party that followed him. He would have Christ formed in them.
 - c. Peter said the same thing in 2Peter 1: “partakers of the divine nature” –by image, by the likeness of Christ, not in essence, for our essence is always that of a human being, but we can be like God, as our sins are forgiven and we progress in the way of Christ.
 - d. There is a mixed metaphor: Until Christ be formed—as an embryo is formed in the womb. Of course Paul is not giving a lesson in biology—he knew that the embryo is not formed in child birth, in the labor pains, but the illustration works most effectively, showing two concerns of a godly minister:
 - i. That he is anxious over the flock of God:
 - ii. That he knows that those who call themselves Christians must be united to Christ, so that His image might be formed in them. They are united to Christ by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is through the preaching of faith that the Holy Spirit works in us to transform us and change us.

May God bless you.