

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Part Ten Doctrinal Section

V. Paul's Vindication of the Gospel Galatians 3:1 - 4:31

- A. The Argument from the Experience of the Galatian Christians (3:1-5)
- B. The Argument from Scripture (3:6-29)
- C. The Argument from Analogy (4:1-11)
- D. A Personal Appeal (4:12-20)

Introduction

This section appears to be parenthetical. Paul departs from his formal argument to express his love and concern for the Galatian Christians. The Apostle has been using very strong language to rebuke the wayward Galatians, but here his emotion changes from godly anger to love. He shows us that rebuke must be mixed with and motivated by love if it is to produce the desired effect.

1. The Love the Galatians Once Had for the Apostle (verses 12-16)

- a. verse 12 - "Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all."
It is somewhat difficult to determine what Paul means in this verse. There are several views. The principle views are:
 1. Paul is appealing to them to be free from the Law as he is.
 2. Paul is appealing to them to act like Gentiles as he now does.
 3. Paul is appealing to the Galatians to love him as he loves them.

The latter seems the most suitable in view of the fact that the whole section is an appeal to Christian love. The latter part of verse 12 could then be understood: "I love you still, I do not feel toward you as an injured man." Paul makes it clear that even though the Galatians have turned from the pure Gospel and have thought ill of him he still loves them and wishes them to be restored.

- b. verse 13 - "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first."
Sir William Ramsey has advanced the theory that Paul contracted malaria while working in the low lands around Perga. He was forced to leave Perga and seek higher ground. He went to Antioch in Pisidia which is a city in the province of Galatia. This region which is 3,000 feet above sea level afforded Paul a place where he could recover and evangelize at the same time. This illustrates how God can use our weaknesses to bring praise to His name.
- c. verse 14 - "And although my physical condition was (such) a trial to you, you did not regard it with contempt or scorn and loathe and reject me; but you received me as an angel of God, (even) as Christ Jesus (Himself)! (from the Amplified New Testament)
Luther comments on this verse: "Indeed, the Galatians are to be commended for receiving the Gospel from a man as unimposing and afflicted all around as Paul was. Wherever he preached the Gospel, Jew and Gentiles raved against him. All the influential and religious people of his day denounced him. But the Galatians did not mind it. That was greatly to their honor, and Paul does not neglect to praise them for it. This praise Paul bestows on none of the other churches to which he wrote." (Commentary on Galatians, by Martin Luther)
- d. verse 15 - "Where is then the blessedness ye spoke 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."
Paul asks, "What has become of your attitude of counting yourselves blessed for having received the Gospel from me?" (paraphrase mine) At one time the Galatians would have done anything for Paul because they were thankful for the Gospel he gave to them.