

# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

## GALATIANS 4:8-20

### LESSON: DELIVERED FROM BONDAGE — February 12, 2017

#### INTRODUCTION:

**4:1-7** The illustration given about a minor child receiving his inheritance although being lord of all was the same as being a slave, for he couldn't for the reason of being under guardianship and supervision which was like being enslaved and held in bondage to the law. But, when the fullness of the time came, God sends forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that they (we) might receive the adoption of sons. And because we are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father, wherefore we will no more be a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ!

#### LESSON: I. THE GALATIANS' PROBLEM Galatians 4:8-11

**4:8** Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Paul appeals to the Galatians by speaking a fact: when they didn't know God, they served the so-called gods that were not gods by nature, meaning, they were ignorant of God and lived in spiritual darkness giving service to these things that were not gods. They were pagans worshiping idols before knowing God. Whatever they served; were accustomed to, by nature they were not even gods. These gods were figments of their imagination; not of the true nature of God.

**4:9** But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?— Paul brings up two things: **after knowing God** and **turning away from the true God**. Paul is saying, now that you have recognized the true God and what it was like, how can you now do the opposite? Why would you turn back to the weak and helpless elements whose slaves you once were? This does not make sense—wanting to go back to religious ceremonies that made them weak and useless, putting them back in bondage. Yes, when you have a privilege in knowing the God that can save you from sin, but still want to go back to those gods that can't save or have any power to do anything. That's a problem. And it's a sin problem. It means you have never really received the Savior by faith, who brings Salvation or you are backslidden from your faith.

**4:10** Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. The elements they observed were days, months, times and years; what religious people did as works, trying to find favor with God. It really kept them in bondage as legalists. Staying on this kind of track made them lifeless instead of fruitful.

**4:11** I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Paul was afraid concerning the labor he had given to the point of exhaustion; the labor he had spent on them may have been wasted and in vain; to no purpose; without effect. This is a warning: do not exchange pagan religion to legalism, and reject the gospel and Christ. Forms and ceremonies will never replace Christ!

#### II. THE APOSTLE'S PLEA Galatians 4:12-20

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

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identifies himself with them by referring to them as brethren. He did not treat them as enemies or attack them, and he begs and pleads with them from a heart of a minister of God to become as he is. He wanted them to be liberated from legalism; free from bondage. *"Don't give up grace for law, but get all the way out from under the law, and come all the way under grace because that's what Paul did. He abandoned his own righteousness of the law for the righteousness of God in Christ."* Though the Jews persecuted him when he first went to Galatia, the Galatian believers had not harmed him; did him no wrong or injustice, but received him when he preached the gospel to them.

**4:13** **Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.** When Paul first preached the gospel to the Galatian churches, he was stricken with some kind of infirmity. Just what it was is not known, although the best guess seems to be some serious eye problem (v.15).

**4:14** **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.** The outward circumstance of Paul's flesh tested him; however, the Galatians didn't meet him with contempt or dislike. He commended them because they didn't despise him; didn't reject him, but received him; welcomed him; took him in and cared for him as an angel or messenger from God, even as Jesus Christ Himself. It was a high honor for Paul.

**4:15** **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.** Paul senses the Galatians has lost their joy of salvation; their happy spirit they spoke of. He bears record that since his infirmity might have dealt with his eyes, he believed the Galatians would have plucked out their own eyes and given him a new pair if they could; expressing their love and devotion for him.

**4:16** **Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?**— Since Paul had not changed and the gospel had not changed, why are they regarding him as an enemy now? - Because he told truth? That's what Paul is asking. Was the church going to treat Paul as an enemy because he had told them the truth?

**4:17** **They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.** Paul, who is telling the Galatians the truth, lets them know that there are those who are zealous; on fire to do them no good. The legalist accused Paul of not telling the truth and of keeping the Galatians in a retarded spiritual condition by the adamant stand against circumcision as a means of salvation. The legalist and false teachers were zealous in their teaching and were out to secure a large following affecting the Galatians by excluding, separating, and shutting them out from Paul, the minister of God whom the legalist have attacked.

- False teachers seek to focus people upon law, works, effort, ritual, ceremony, observances, sacrifice, rules, and regulations—upon something that requires man to work at being good or doing good in order to become acceptable to God.
- The true minister of God seeks to focus people upon God Himself: His love, honor, and praise—upon the fact that God Himself has provided the way for man to become acceptable to Him, and that way is through His Son Jesus Christ.

**4:18** **But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.** Now, Paul encourages the church by letting them know that it's a good thing to give special attention to the right thing, even when he's not there with them. Paul wanted the Galatians to be zealous over Christ;

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over the salvation Christ has brought. They had not lost the experience of salvation, but they were losing the enjoyment of their salvation and finding satisfaction in their works instead. Their zeal for the right thing should be present at all times.

**4:19** **My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,**— This shows deep affection calling them little children. It expresses the tenderness of Paul and the immaturity of the Galatians. Paul had travailing pangs as a mother would undergo in birth; agonizing with them because he wanted to see Christ formed in them; he wanted Christ to be seen in their lives, and now again he remembers this process.

**4:20** **I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.** Paul really desired to be present with them. It would be better face to face, than writing. If only he could speak to them, he could straighten matters out in a shorter time. Literally, he was in doubt of them; perplexed; at his wits' end, not knowing the best way to prevent them from the error into which they were drifting.

## SUMMARY:

When the Galatians didn't know God, they served the so-called gods that were not gods by nature, meaning they were ignorant of God and lived in spiritual darkness giving service to these things that were not gods. But, now after finding God or rather God finding them, they want to go back to the weak and helpless elements whose slaves they once were— such as observing days, months, times and years, which is what religious people did as works, trying to find favor with God. Such observances really kept them in bondage as legalists. Paul was afraid he labored in vain (**4:8-11**).

Paul begs and pleads with them to become as he is, free from bondage for they are brethren as he is. They did him no wrong or injustice when he preached to them before. When Paul first preached the gospel to the Galatian churches, he was stricken with some kind of infirmity. He commended them because they didn't despise him; didn't reject him, but received him; welcomed him as an angel or messenger from God, even as Jesus Christ Himself. Paul senses the Galatians has lost their joy. He bears record that since his infirmity might have dealt with his eyes, he believed the Galatians would have plucked out their own eyes and given him a new pair which expresses their love and devotion for him. But because he had told them the truth were they going to treat Paul as an enemy? The legalist and false teachers were zealous in their teaching and were out to secure a large following affecting the Galatians by excluding, separating, and shutting them out from Paul, the minister of God whom the legalist attacked. Paul encourages the church that, it's a good thing to give special attention to the right thing, even when he's not there with them. Their zeal for the right thing should be present at all times. Paul had agonized as if he were undergoing birth pangs for them again until Christ is formed in them. The last thing Paul writes is that he really desired to be present with them so he could change his tone because he was literally in doubt of them (**4:12-20**).