

**GALATIANS - SERMON 20**  
**GALATIANS 4:12-20 — TEACHER/ DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIPS**  
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INTRODUCTION:

Read Galatians 4:12-20

In addition to the false doctrine which the Judaizers were spreading among the Galatian churches there was also another issue that was causing a disruption in that ministry. The second issue was one of ministerial manipulation. Not only was the doctrine of the Judaizers evil, the method of dealing with the Galatians employed by the Judaizers was also evil. Their methods of ministry were as subversive as their doctrine.

In these verses (12-20) Paul addresses the matter of ministerial manipulation, the false methods of the Judaizers. Their method was simple and timeless. Not only did they contradict the teaching of Paul, they also sought to discredit Paul's person. They sought to disaffect the Galatians towards Paul. By alienating the Galatians from Paul, the Judaizers would win an audience and an acceptance for their false teaching. This is a common method. This is the *ad hominem* argument, the argument against the man.

Galatians 4:12

*Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.*

Paul's response to the method of the Judaizers among the Galatians is that they, the Galatians were urged to bear the same affection for him and he does for them. Paul urges his readers to lay aside any unkind feelings they might have toward him as the result of the methods of the Judaizers. Paul wants the Galatians to regard him as he still regards them, with affection. Paul is not harboring hard feelings towards the Galatians, *you have not injured me at all.*

In verses 13-16 Paul discusses the nature of a true biblical teacher/disciple relationship.

OUTLINE:

- I THE NATURE OF A TRUE AND BIBLICAL TEACHER/DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP, vv 13-16.
- II THE NATURE OF A CULTIC TEACHER/DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP, vv 17-18.
- III PAUL'S CONCLUDING STATEMENTS, vv 19-20.

I THE NATURE OF A TRUE AND BIBLICAL TEACHER/DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP.

In order to reclaim the appropriate relationship Paul discusses their former relationship with him. He sets before us how a teacher and his disciples ought to view and treat one another.

- A The nature of a true and biblical teacher/disciple relationship is one of sacrifice on the part of the teacher, vs 13

*You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.*

The word *infirmity* means disease, sickness, weakness, frailty, malady, or feebleness. In Paul there must have been some kind of disease or weakness during the time of his initial ministry among the Galatians. His condition was of some apparent distress and obvious to everyone. Perhaps it was related to his eyes, based upon the verse 15 reference to the eyes.

Paul had gone to the region of Galatia in spite of his physical condition. With reference to the teacher Paul was willing to minister in spite of personal discomfort and public humiliation. A proper biblical teacher sacrifices personal comfort for the sake of his ministry.

#### 2 Corinthians 11:23-30

*Are they ministers of Christ?; I speak as a fool; I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.*

Paul ministered in a continuous situation of personal self-sacrifice. Paul suffered physically. He suffered emotionally (1 Corinthians 2:3). He suffered from persecution.

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:4-9

*But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness; God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.*

Paul ministered even at personal financial cost.

- B The nature of a true and biblical teacher/disciple relationship is one of affection and reciprocation on the part of the disciple, vv 14-15

*And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.*

The teacher/disciple relationship is a two way relationship. The teacher sacrifices for the sake of the disciple, but the disciple reciprocates with affection. The Galatians had initially responded to Paul's ministry with appreciation and thankfulness. The Galatians had the attitude of wanting to give back to their teacher (in this case even their eyes). Paul commended the Galatians for this attitude.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

*And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*

1 Corinthians 9:7-11

*Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*

The point is that the teacher ought to have some material provision from his disciples as he pours out himself in the ministry unto them.

Galatians 4:16

*Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?*

In light of their former relationship, Paul queries the Galatians as to why they presently view him as an enemy.

The reason for the change in the attitude of the Galatians towards Paul is rooted in the ministry of the Judaizers.

## II THE NATURE OF A CULTIC TEACHER/DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP.

A In a cultic teacher/disciple relationship there is evidence of a selfish motive.

Galatians 4:17

*They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.*

The word *zealously court* - ζηλοῦσιν (*affect* - KJV) means to have strong feelings for something. The Judaizers had zealously sought the loyalty of the Galatians. They promote strong feelings towards themselves.

Paul makes an important observation with respect to the affection-seeking Judaizers - *but for no good*. Though they seem to desire your loyalty and affections it is not for a good purpose or for good motives. They do not want what is best for their disciples but rather what satisfies their own selfish ends.

2 Peter 2:1-3

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*

The motive of these false teachers was for exploitation and covetousness. They have a deep rooted desire to make material profit from their disciples. Paul would carefully avoid this charge personally by refusing even honorable financial support from churches.

2 Peter 2:14-15

*. . . having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness...*

One of the marks of a cultic teacher is selfish motives. They are often in it for personal financial gain.

- B In a cultic teacher/disciple relationship there is evidence of isolation from outside influences.

Galatians 4:17

*They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.*

The phrase *they want to exclude you* refers to the practice of the Judaizers of excluding the Galatians from the influence of any other teachers in order to strengthen the dependency and loyalty upon and to them (Judaizers). This is standard cultic behavior. There are many examples in our times (Applewhite in California, Jim Jones in Gyana, etc).

The principle to glean here is that when a teacher urges you to seek teaching no where else and to listen exclusively to him, “grab your wallet and run.” A true teacher is not intimidated by his disciples hearing from other sources. Corrupt teachers are threatened by exposure to other teachers among their disciples.

Galatians 4:18

*But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.*

Paul puts a proper perspective upon zeal here. Zeal is not bad, it is good if it is placed in a good (righteous) object. Paul goes on to exclude the idea of isolation - *not only when I am present with you*.

*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.*

Notice how Paul addresses the Galatians - *my little children*. There are two reasons for this address. First, it is an expression of deep affection and interest in them. Secondly, Paul had been the providential means of begetting them in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. He brought the gospel to them. Paul was their spiritual father. The birth Paul refers to in these verses is not physical but spiritual birth.

In essence Paul is saying that he does not enjoy rebuking the Galatians. He has had to be strong and rebuking in his tone thus far for good reason. Nevertheless, he longs to come and see them and to demonstrate his true fatherly affections for them.

A true teacher does not enjoy rebuking his disciples. He enjoys being with them and being affectionate with them.

#### Conclusion:

Paul has dealt with the doctrinal aberration that the Judaizers brought in among the churches. He has also dealt with the true teacher/disciple relationship by contrasting the true with the cultic. He has warned them about ministerial manipulation.

It is imperative that we not allow people to turn our affections away from true preachers of the gospel. We must not view as enemies those who tell us the truth.

Hymn # 285