

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 7-6-14 AM NOTES  
"A PLEA FROM A PERPLEXED PASTOR"  
GALATIANS 4:1-20  
#10 in Series, "Galatians: Living With Roots"

**Galatians 4:20 (ESV)** "I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am **perplexed** about you."

**Galatians 4:9 (NASB)** "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"

I. God's Blessing (vv. 1-7)

A. What We Were (vv. 1-3)

**Galatians 3:24 (NKJV)** "Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

B. What God Did (v. 4)

**John 1:1 (NKJV)** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

**John 1:14a (NKJV)** "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."

C. What We Have Because of What God Did (vv. 5-7)

1. Redemption (v. 5a)

**Romans 6:17b (NKJV)** "...you were slaves of sin..."

2. Adoption (v. 5b)

**John 17:23b (NKJV)** "...that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have **loved them as You have loved Me.**"

3. The Indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 6)

**Romans 8:15-16 (NKJV)** "<sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' <sup>16</sup>The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

4. The Inheritance of a Son (v. 7)

**Romans 8:17 (NKJV)** "and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together."

II. The Galatians' Backsliding (vv. 8-11)

**Colossians 2:6-7 (NKJV)** “<sup>6</sup>As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

III. Paul's Beseeching (vv. 12-20)

A. His Appeal (v. 12a)

**1 Corinthians 9:21-22 (NKJV)** “<sup>21</sup>to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; <sup>22</sup>to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some.”

B. His Affection (vv. 12b-16)

C. His Alarm (vv. 17-18)

D. His Ambition (vv. 19-20)

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I think the one negative emotion that I experience as a Pastor as much if not more than any other is perplexity. The dictionary defines perplexity as a confused feeling that you have because you cannot understand something. I stay confused a lot with people when it comes to my calling as Pastor. Certainly I sometimes experience the negative emotions grief, disappointment, and anger, but none of those to the extent that I experience being perplexed. Remember, I am only speaking of negative emotions. I have lots of positive emotions associated with this calling to be a Pastor or shepherd of God's people. There is a

great deal of happiness, excitement and satisfaction, but negatively, nothing comes close to the experience of perplexity. I stay perplexed at why people do what they do and don't do what they don't do. I stay perplexed with why so many people who profess Christ have no (or at least very little) hunger for corporate worship and corporate study of the Word of God. Any excuse at all to do something other than gather together on Sunday morning and Sunday night seems sufficient for so many. That perplexes me. I am perplexed with how flippantly people just leave a church instead of honor the covenant they made when they joined. I am perplexed with how many people just leave the church rather than be committed to work through problems and love people who may not have acted very loving toward them. I am really perplexed with how many take the stewardship of God's money He has put under their management so lightly and value personal toys over the Great Commission to take the Gospel to the world. I am perplexed over these things and a whole lot more like them. When I am perplexed, I find myself in good company. The Apostle Paul was perplexed with so many things going on in the churches of Galatia. The ESV translates **Galatians 4:20 (ESV)** "I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for **I am perplexed** about you." The main thing that perplexed Paul was how these Galatians had been set free from legalism and had been made free in Christ and now they were listening to false teachers and putting themselves back in bondage. We see a summary of this perplexity in **Galatians 4:9 (NASB)** "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?" Actually the whole book of Galatians is a plea from Paul to return to the freedom that is the birthright of every child of God, but this plea is probably clearer in our text today more than any other place in the book.

Since we have a lot of verses to cover, let's just jump right into the text.

## I. God's Blessing (V1-7)

Paul begins this important passage by reminding the Galatians and us how we have been so blessed by God. He is reminding them what they are forgetting when they put themselves back in legalism (being accepted by God by keeping rules).

### A. What We Were (V1-3)

The illustration Paul is using here is a child who is the heir in a wealthy home who had not come of age (passed into adulthood). For all practical purposes the child was treated no different than a slave. In fact, in the Roman world the household slaves were over the child and were even charged with the child's discipline and training. The point of this analogy is that the law plays a similar role in the story of salvation. What does he mean in verse 3 by "the elements of the world"? The word "elements" is translated "elementary principles of the world" in the ESV. It's much like we would say "the ABC's" – it is the elementary basic things. The false teachers who were confusing the Galatians were telling them that the law was the graduate school for the Gospel. But Paul is saying, "No, the law is the ABC's." Going back to the law would be like a Ph. D. returning to kindergarten. Paul is saying that the legalism of being under the law is a sign of a lack of maturity. We saw back in **Galatians 3:24 (NKJV)** "Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Legalism, living by the law, is going backward, not forward. When we look to the law for salvation or as a believer think that we have to keep outward rules and regulations to be accepted by God, we are going backward into slavery. All false religion teaches salvation by works. Before Christ we were in bondage to the elemental things of the world, the law or the demands of a false religion that could offer no salvation, no peace, no assurance, no security.

I fear that may be where some of you are. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century John Wesley was in graduate school at Oxford. He had a brilliant mind, but no assurance of salvation and no security and thus no joy. He was the son of a Pastor and had been ordained himself. He was a member of "The Holy Club" and his life was filled with good works. He visited inmates in prison, helped the poor and fed hungry children. He went to church, took communion, and gave sacrificially to the poor and to the church. He regularly said prayers and fasted. Yet, there was no peace. He was as Galatians 4:3 says "in bondage under the elements of the world". It was the rule keeping and the good works that he trusted in. Listen to Wesley's own words after

he came to genuine salvation. He said that he came to “trust in Christ only for salvation” and then he was given an inward assurance that his sins had been taken away. After looking back on his pre-conversion experience, he wrote, “I had even then the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a son.” [John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, page 109].

#### B. What God Did (V4)

There are some key phrases in this verse that summarize what God did. The first is, “But when the fullness of the time had come”. It literally says “the full days, the exact time”. The emphasis is that there is no chance timing here. It was all on our sovereign God’s exact timetable. It was at a time previously fixed by the Father. In fact, everything that God does is “when the fullness of the time had come”. Let’s examine that phrase, “the fullness of time” a little more in depth. It was the fullness of time **spiritually**. The Old Testament books were gathered together under Ezra and others, and through the synagogue system the accepted Scriptures were widely taught including the prophetic passages referring to the coming of the Messiah. It was also the fullness of time **culturally**. There was a world wide Greek influence in philosophy and learning, and Greek was the universal language of culture and intellectual teaching. The Greek language is probably the most precise of all of man’s languages. It was the fullness of time **politically**. The Romans developed an amazing road system and mail system. Because of their iron rule, there was relatively safe travel throughout the empire and on the seas. This allowed for the rapid spread of the Gospel in the first centuries after Christ’s death and resurrection.

Another key phrase in verse four is “God sent forth His Son”. The language here implies His preexistence. God the Son was in existence from before time was created. In **John 1:1 (NKJV)** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” His conception and birth were not His beginning; it was simply His taking on humanity. In the fullness of time God sent forth His preexistent Son to the world. **John 1:14a (NKJV)** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”

Another key phrase is, “born under the law”. That simply means that He was subject to the law’s demands like every other person. He was judged by His conformity to the law. Unlike every other person ever born, he fully kept the law in letter and in spirit. The law reveals us as sinners, but the law revealed Jesus as sinless. He alone fully kept the law; He alone was without sin which was necessary for Him to take our sin. That is what God did.

#### C. What We Have Because of What God Did (V5-7)

##### 1. Redemption (V5a)

All of mankind is born under the law. That is, we are judged by the standard of God’s moral law. What the law reveals about all mankind is that they are slaves of sin. **Romans 6:17b (NKJV)** “...you were slaves of sin...” The only hope for a slave is that they might be redeemed out of the slave market. The word “redeem” means to purchase out of the slave market. Under the law it was revealed that we were slaves of sin. The law was powerless to do anything about our condition. The law is like a mirror that reveals but has no solution. For example, if you hold a mirror up to your face and it reveals that your face is dirty, you don’t try to scrape off the dirt with the mirror. You need to get some soap and water! The law reveals that we are slaves of sin, but only the shed blood of Christ can redeem us out of sin’s slave market (1 Peter 1:18-19).

##### 2. Adoption (V5b)

I know of no truth in Scripture that makes me want to shout, “Hallelujah” more than the truth of adoption. The word is made up of two Greek words: There is the word for “son” and the word for “placing”. Our adoption is our placing as sons of God in God’s family. Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God”, but those in Christ are placed as sons in God’s family through adoption. Often in Roman culture, a wealthy man would adopt a faithful slave as His son. He was no longer a slave but a son. That seems to be the background of Paul’s concept of adoption. **Galatians 4:7a (NKJV)** “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son...” The adopted status of believers means that in and through Christ God loves us as he loves his only-begotten Son. We are regenerated – made into a new creation in Christ, justified by faith and declared righteous in Christ’s righteousness, and that allows us to be adopted into God’s family as

His son and loved with the same love with which He loves His only begotten Son. **John 17:23b (NKJV)** "...that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have **loved them as You have loved Me.**"

### 3. The Indwelling Holy Spirit (V6)

In this passage, we have the Trinity and what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have done for and in us. God the Father sent forth His Son (V4); God the Son redeemed us thus allowing the Father to adopt us; God the Holy Spirit now indwells us that we might have an intimate love relationship with the Father. To those whom He adopts, the Father sends the Spirit of Christ into their hearts to empower them, but also to know Him. The phrase "Abba, Father" is a term of endearment that is limited to a love relationship. The Holy Spirit then bears witness that we are adopted children of the Father and enables us to love the Father and be aware of the Father's love for us. We are told in **Romans 8:15-16 (NKJV)** "<sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' <sup>16</sup>The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God".

Ah, but there is something else that we have because of what he has done.

### 4. The Inheritance of a Son (V7)

Jesus is the only begotten Son, but as adopted children into the family, we are joint heirs of the Father's inheritance with Christ Jesus. **Romans 8:17 (NKJV)** "and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together." Think of it: we will share and share alike with Jesus!

Oh what blessings the Lord bestowed on these Galatians and everyone including us who comes to Him through Christ.

## II. The Galatians' Backsliding (V8-11)

The Galatians were backsliding from the freedom of grace and sliding into the bondage of the law. Let me give you a brilliant statement. Going backward is not the way forward. That's what the Galatians were doing or at least considering doing. The legalism that bound you before you came to Christ and knew God is understandable. But now you have been set free in Christ; why are you going back to that which led you to Him? Christ is the final destination. Keep walking and growing in Him and don't go back to the ABC's. You are "in Christ" and the way you proceed forward is to continue in the way you came to Him. I believe that the most important verses for continuing on with Christ are **Colossians 2:6-7 (NKJV)** "<sup>6</sup>As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." You received Him by grace through faith. The way you mature and walk in joy is to continue trusting Him to give you His enabling grace to obey and walk victorious over sin. The last thing you want to do is to go backward into doing religious works in the power of your own flesh to try to earn His acceptance. That is the way to insecurity, grief, and frustration.

This following a works based acceptance by God brought bondage, but now he says "you know God". A Christian is one who knows God; not one who just knows about God. Another way of describing a Christian is that he is one known by God. We know Him because He first knew us and called us unto Himself. Why would anyone go back to the bondage of trying to earn His favor and acceptance? His knowing us before we came to know Him is a testimony to His grace. He loved us and drew us even though there was nothing there to merit His loving act of bringing us to Himself so that we could know Him. Why would anyone turn away from such grace and try to cancel His grace and to earn His favor?

Verse 10 describes the Jewish ceremonial law as well as many pagan religions. This never has and never will bring us salvation or grow us after we are saved. Beware of any system (whether it calls itself Christian or not) that reduces relationship to a ritual. Verse 11 finds Paul opening his heart and grieving. He was perhaps even doubting that they had ever been saved. He thinks about the sacrifice he made in getting the Gospel to them, getting stoned at Lystra, the hard travels and persecution at every turn. Now if they are turning away, was that all in vain?

### III. Paul's Beseeching (V12-20)

Beseech is a favorite word of Paul. He used it in Romans 12:1 and Ephesians 4:1. The same word is used in 4:12 where it is translated "urge". It means to call to one's side with the desire to help. In these verses, Paul totally changes his approach. Thus far, he has been confrontational and not very personal. He has sounded more like a prosecuting attorney because that is what was needed. Now he changes to a more personal affectionate tone. It is interesting that the harshest words Paul uses anywhere is in Galatians and the most affectionate words are used in Galatians. Paul was not just a scholar without a heart. He possessed a shepherd's heart and he cared for these Galatians with whom he had invested his life.

#### A. His Appeal (V12a)

Paul is through with the arguments. Now he gets personal. Paul reminds them that when he came to them, he met them where they were. He was adaptable with anything that did not compromise the Gospel. He practiced what he said in **1 Corinthians 9:21-22 (NKJV)** "<sup>21</sup>to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; <sup>22</sup>to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some." Paul met them where they were and now he is asking them to become like him and walk in freedom and serve the lord in joy. That would necessitate laying aside all legalism and living in freedom and obeying God from a loving heart empowered by the Holy Spirit.

#### B. His Affection (V12b-16)

Verse 12b is an amazing statement. This really touched me. The Galatians had believed lies about Paul; they had been or were close to forsaking what he taught them and yet, he has forgiven them. I pray that God gives me the ability to respond like that when those I love perplex me and turn from the truth. Paul then goes back to some fond memories of his first visit with them. Paul had some kind of physical problem that was unpleasant to look at or be around. Many in that culture considered maladies like Paul had to be judgment from the gods and they despised the person with the ailment. We don't know what the ailment was though Malaria and eye disease has been put forth as possibilities. The timing indicated that this was probably the same ailment that in 2 Corinthians 12 in called his "thorn in the flesh". While we cannot know the specifics of the illness, we know that Paul continued to proclaim the Gospel and the people accepted him.

In verses 15-16 we see the level of their love for Paul. They cared for him in his illness in spite of the revolting nature of it. The phrase in verse 15 is not likely referring to his malady involving the eyes. It was likely assaying like when we admire someone's generosity we say, "They would give you the shirt off of their back." In spite of that closeness, there now seems to be a breach and Paul is agonizing over that.

#### C. His Alarm (V17-18)

"They" refers to these false teachers. The word "court" speaks of a man courting a woman. He is saying that these false teachers talk like they care but they are false suitors who have no genuine love for you or interest in your welfare. They only want to stroke their own ego by being admired. Literally, these verses say that they are flattering and making much of you that will flatter and make much of them. A common trait of false teachers is to flatter their hearers. It may be something like, "You deserve your miracle today; you are favored by God and you can expect wealth and prosperity and your best life now." BEWARE of any preacher or teacher that never tells you some negative things that aren't easy to hear.

#### D. His Ambition (V19-20)

This should be the heart of every Pastor, every parent and every discipler. Our heart's desire ought to be to see Christ formed in every person we teach, mentor or disciple. The reality is that when a person begins to be filled with the Word of God, the more they begin to think the things that Christ thinks, love the things that Christ loves, do the things Christ does, and suffer the things that Christ suffers. When we are filled with the Word that centers on Christ, we will begin to see Christ formed in us. The process of discipling another person can sometimes be like childbirth. It is painful and there is an urgency about it. Is Christ being formed in you?