

## WHERE IS THE BLESSING?

**TEXT: GAL. 4:13-18**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Here in Galatians 4:13 and 14, the apostle Paul reminds the Galatians that when he first preached the Gospel to them they received him warmly -- "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."
2. Paul sought to touch their hearts by reminding them of those early days when he came to Antioch in Pisidia, and to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, and preached the Gospel to them. These were Galatian cities that Paul evangelized.
3. In Galatians 4:15, Paul asked them, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?"
4. Apparently they had lost their blessing.
5. Whenever Christians turn from salvation by grace to salvation by keeping the law they lose their blessing (cf. 4:20, 21).
6. Whenever Christians turn to false doctrine they lose their blessing.
7. Matthew Henry said, "Where is now the blessedness they once spoke of? What has become of that pleasure they used to take in communion with God, and in the company of his servants? The more to impress upon them a just shame of their present conduct, he again asks (4:16), '*Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*'"

### **I. THEY LOST THEIR BLESSING WHEN THEY TURNED AWAY FROM THE TRUE GOSPEL (4:13-15).**

1. They thought they still had the Gospel, but in fact it was a false gospel (cf. 1:6-9).
2. But "at the first" (4:13), they accepted the true Gospel.
3. Paul suffered from an "infirmity of the flesh" (4:13), but this did not hinder them from accepting the Gospel, and the man who brought the Gospel to them.
4. Paul does not specify the "infirmity." In II Corinthians 12:7-10, he calls it "a thorn in the flesh."
5. Because of Galatians 4:15, some have speculated that Paul had some sort of eye disease.
6. The word "temptation" (4:14) can be understood in different ways. It usually means a difficult trial, i.e., some physical infirmity.
7. James 1:2, 3 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

8. Our Lord said in Matthew 10:40, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." The Galatians were very responsive to Paul's preaching "at the first" (4:13), but now they had changed (4:14-16).
9. At first they loved Paul and received him "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (4:14). But now they treated him as an "enemy" (4:16; cf. 5:7).
10. Paul reminded them of how they first received him (4:14b).

Thank God for you, good friend of mine  
Seldom is friendship such as thine;  
How very much I wish to be  
As helpful as you've been to me  
Thank God for You

When I recall from time to time  
How you inspired this heart of mine  
I find myself inclined to pray,  
"God bless my friend this very day."  
Thank God for You

In prayer requests, right from my heart  
I ask, on you God to impart  
Rich blessings from His storehouse rare,  
And grant to you His gracious care.  
Thank God for You

So often at the thrones of grace,  
There comes a picture of your face,  
And then instinctively I pray  
That God may guide you all the way  
Thank God for You

Some day I hope with you to stand  
Before the throne at God's right hand,  
And say to you at journey's end,  
You've been to me a faithful friend.  
Thank God for You. -- Joseph Clark

## **II. THEY LOST THEIR BLESSING WHEN THEY TURNED AWAY FROM THE GOSPEL PREACHER (4:16).**

1. Paul was disappointed by their behaviour (4:11, 20), but he was not personally offended (4:12).
2. Paul was only concerned for the cause of Christ.
3. Paul was accustomed to this. In II Timothy 1:15, Paul wrote, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes."
4. And he says in II Timothy 4:10, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."
5. Paul understood that they were not really turning away from him, but from the Lord (cf. John 15:18-20, 25; 16:1-3, 33).
6. The Galatians had turned away from the apostle Paul, but he hadn't given up on them

## **III. THEY LOST THEIR BLESSING WHEN THEY TURNED TO THE FALSE TEACHERS (4:17, 18).**

1. False teachers have wrong motives. They are looking for a following. Paul says, "They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them" (4:17).
2. Strong's Concordance says "zealously affect" means, "to burn with zeal."
3. But it is "not well" because their motives are not good. Many religious people are zealous but oftentimes they are not right with God.
4. Matthew Henry says, "There may appear to be a great deal of zeal where yet there is but little truth and sincerity. It is the usual way of seducers to insinuate themselves into people's affections, and by that means to draw them into their opinions. Whatever pretences such may make, they have usually more regard to their own interest than that of others, and will not stick at ruining the reputation of others, if by that means they can raise their own."
5. Paul warned the Galatians that the Judaizers would "exclude" them (4:17), i.e., cut them off from contact with Paul and other Gospel preachers. That way the Galatians would be ensnared.
6. The words in Galatians 4:18 -- "and not only when I am present with you" are similar to Philippians 2:12. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence..."
7. The Philippians obeyed even when Paul was absent. The Galatians were not as consistent.

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. Back in the 19th century, the slums of London were dirty and filled with beggars and drunkards.
2. A well-educated minister named Richard Green spent ten frustrating years trying to reform the poor people living there. After ten years he gave up, saying, "It's no use. These men will go on drinking and gambling until doomsday!"
3. Richard Green returned to Oxford a very discouraged man.
4. Around that same time, another minister went into the same dirty slums but he tried a different approach, and his results were vastly different.
5. William Booth preached the Gospel of grace and multitudes were saved and delivered from drinking and other vices.
6. Richard Green failed because he preached a gospel of works. William Booth succeeded because only the true Gospel can transform sinners into saints.