

Paul gets personal

△ Galatians 4:8-20

Intro

Here we have two subjects in one reading

But what they have in common is that Paul gets personal with the Galatians

In the first part, Paul shows his despair for the Galatians

In the second part, Paul uses his appeal to friendship to convince the Galatians to come to his side

What side was that again?

Well Paul is arguing with the Galatians to not listen to recent visitors

Who try to convince them that they can only be true Christians if they adhere to the Jewish religious customs

Like circumcision or adhering to Jewish festivals

Instead he wants them to accept that these are now not necessary anymore

As Christ Crucifixion and Resurrection have now replaced that

Giving is freedom to live from the

slavery of adhering to the Law of Moses

Enslaved?

△ Gal 4:8-11

In this first section, Paul uses the term slavery to make his point

But also using this term he expresses his despair with the Galatians

1. Before they followed Christ, they were enslaved

To beings that are not God!

Paul recognises that the former pagan worship, worshipped something real

Beings that are not God

The must the thrones, dominions, rulers or powers

△ Col 1:16

Spirits that are not of God

They are?

2. Now that they know God

Or, that they are now known by God

Is that how we view our conversion?

That God knows us now that we have accepted him?

How can you turn back to those spirits!

Controversially, Paul puts the worship practices of Israel in the same category as the Roman/Greek worship of many gods

And he calls this slavery!

He is so against Hebrew worship practices

as they are also a form of slavery to adhere to the law as precisely as possible

One aspect is to follow the special Jewish religious days

That makes us think of our own practice to follow Christmas, Easter, etc

Is that a form of slavery for us?

We should celebrate every day as Christmas or Easter!

3. I have wasted my time!

This is almost a rejection of the Galatians

He almost put his own relationship with the Galatians on the line

As he indirectly threatens that he will have to start again from the beginning with them

And perhaps also start again with their relationship?

Appeal to the special friendship

△ Gal 4:12-20

In this next section Paul appeals to their relationship

He calls them friends

He reminds that that they have never treated him wrongly

implying that if they continue in their current way, that they will do him wrong

He reminds them of when they

first met

That it was due to his illness or infirmity he preached the gospel to them

He must have been in a horrible way, perhaps physically repulsive

But despite that, they welcomed him and his message

They were even ready to give their own eyes if that would have helped Paul

Could be a saying like, It cost me an arm and a leg

We would not physically cut off our arms or legs

But it is an expression that they were willing to do a lot for Paul

What infirmity?

One train of thought is that Paul had impaired vision

Others think that due to all the flogging, mistreatment, torture, he had a physical long term disability

Is that the thorn he asked God to remove

His appeal is that the Galatians become like him, as he had become as them

He had sworn off the Jewish worship practices

Just like they had to swear off their pagan worship practices

pagan worship practices

To worship God and Jesus

So he reminds them to be more like him

Also his physical impairment may be that Paul became more like Christ

He had become physically impaired for the Gospel

Just as Christ had to be crucified for the Gospel

Paul sacrificed his own wellbeing for the gospel

by taking on his Cross

That makes us also think, what kind of discomfort are we willing to accept to proclaim the gospel of Christ?

Paul appeals to their goodwill for him

Now that he tells them the truth, which they had accepted before, will they also reject them?

He then compares the attention of the other missionaries as competitors of him

They want to isolate the Galatians from him (Paul), but also the other Christian fellowships

So that they would need to rely on the new missionaries for support

new missionaries for support.

Childbirth metaphor

Paul refers to birth pains for them

He sees that in a way that they have regressed

And is in pain for them

But also birth pangs / child birth in the bible relates to our second birth in the Spirit

But instead of that Paul is in pain for them to accept Christ again

He is willing for Christ to be born among them, in their community

So that they relate to him as a community

And not to these others that have come with a different message

What can we learn?

First of all enslavement

Are we truly free in Christ?

Or have we made ourselves slaves to other things

Religious practices?

Or other enslaving things like, alcohol, gambling

Paul makes the point that if we are not in Christ, we are enslaved to something else

So maybe we need to review our own lives

Friendship

It feels disingenuous to appeal to someone's friendship to convince them to accept Jesus Christ

Almost like blackmail

But it is interesting that the UK often speaks of the 'special relationship' the UK has with the US

Reminding the big brother to listen to little brother

Because of our shared language, culture and heritage

And that we do not find weird

Friendship evangelism

Paul made friends when he came, while preaching the gospel

He was willing to invest a lot in the relationship

And in return the Galatians were willing to also invest a lot in their relationship with Paul

Are we willing to invest in our relationship with non-Christians?

As that was clearly Paul's practice?

So that is the second challenge

What are we will to give, invest (emotionally or financially) or give up, in order to win people for Christ?

So maybe that is a second aspect of our lives that we can reflect upon

our lives that we can reflect upon

Amen