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Until Messiah is Formed in You
4: 12-20

Until Messiah is formed in you DIG: What does Paul want the Galatians to do? Why was he so disappointed? What justification did Paul give that he became like them – a Gentile? What was his purpose in doing so? What was Paul's physical ailment? What did Paul discover on his second visit to Galatia? How did he react? But what happened to the Galatians?

REFLECT: Paul said, "To the Jewish people I identified as a Jew, so that I might win over the Jewish people." Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts – to the Jew first and also to the Greek." What are you doing to win Jews to Messiah? How is the Messiah being formed in you? What difference has knowing ADONAI made in your life? Is your life with Messiah moving forward into liberty or backward into bondage?

Paul appeals in a touching way to the Galatians to maintain their freedom from the influence of the Judaizers. He reminds them of their enthusiastic reception of him and the gospel which he first preached, and tells them of his longing to be with them now in order that he might speak to them personally.

Paul was a wonderful spiritual father; **he** knew just how to balance rebuke with love. Now **he** turns from "spanking" to "embracing" as **he** reminds the believers in **Galatia** of **their** love for **him** and **his** love for **them**. At one point **they** were willing to sacrifice anything for **Paul**, so great was **their** love, but now **he** had become **their** enemy. **The Judaizers** (**to see link click Ag – Who Were the Judaizers**) had come in and stolen **their** affection.[110]

I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you (4:12a). Paul spoke of how **he** identified with **the Galatians** as non-**Jewish** believers, being equal brothers and sisters in **the Lord**. This is something **the Judaizers**, who demanded ritual circumcision and proselytization of **them** did not

do (see the commentary on **Acts Bb – An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53: The third level were Proselytes of the Covenant**). It's as if **he** was saying, "**Become** as **I** am, free from the bondage of trying to keep the 613 commandments of Moshe for salvation. **I** became as **you** are, **Gentile**." **He** appealed to **them** to do this because **he**, who had possessed all the advantages of being **Torah** observant, had foregone those advantages and had placed **himself** on the same level in relation to **the Torah** as **the Gentiles**. **He** tells **them** that **he** gave up all those time-honored **Jewish** customs and those dear associations to **become like** them. **He** has lived **like a Gentile** so that **he** might preach to **the Gentiles**. **He** pleads with **them** not to abandon **him**, when **he** had abandoned all for **them**.

The Galatians could not fail to remember the occasion when at the close of **Paul's** address at Pisidian Antioch, **the Jews** departed from the synagogue, but **the Gentiles** besought **him** to repeat to **them** the words of life on the next Shabbat. **They** could not fail to remember how **the Jews** had expelled **Paul** from the city (see the commentary on **Acts Bo – Paul's Message in Pisidian Antioch**). **They, the Galatians**, had pursued **Paul** to maintain the freedom of the gospel. Now, **he**, in turn, was appealing to **them** to maintain the freedom of that same gospel.[111]

Although **Paul** was primarily **an apostle to the Gentiles (2:8), he** never lost **his** passion for **the salvation** of **his own people (Romans 9:3). To the Jewish people I identified as a Jew.** Within scriptural limits **Paul** would be as **Jewish** as necessary when ministering to **Jews**. In **Messiah, he** was no longer bound to the ceremonies, rituals, eating kosher, observing special days, or traditions of **Judaism**. Following or not following any of those things had no effect on **his** spiritual life. But if following them would open a door for **his** witnessing to **Jews**, **he** would gladly do **so that he might win over the Jewish people. To those under Torah I became like one under Torah (though not myself being under Torah), so that I might win over those under Torah (First Corinthians 9:20).** But **Paul** was willing to live like **a Gentile** when **he** was ministering to **Gentiles**.[112]

To those outside Torah, like one outside Torah (though not being outside God's Torah, but within the framework of **Messiah's Torah** as upheld by **Messiah), so that I might win over those outside Torah (First Corinthians 9:21). Paul** was still under authority, but not still under **the Torah**. **He** was responsible to **God (First Corinthians 3:9)** and **Messiah (First Corinthians 4:1)**, and was enabled by **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** to **love** (see **Bu – Brothers and Sisters, You were Called to Freedom**).[113]

To the weak I became weak, so that I might win over the weak. Paul was willing to identify with those, whether **Jew** or **Gentile**, who did not have the power of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** in them to understand the gospel. When among those who were spiritually **weak**, **he** put the cookies on the bottom shelf. In other words, **those** who needed simple or repeated teaching, that is what **he** gave **them**. **His** purpose was to **become all things to all men, so that by all means possible I might save some (First Corinthians 9:22). He** did not compromise the gospel. **He** would not change the truth in any way in order to satisfy anyone. But **he** would condescend in any way for **anyone** if that would in any way help bring **them** to **Messiah**.[114]

You have done me no wrong. The Galatians might have easily spurned **Paul** and refused **his** fellowship. **You know it was because of a physical ailment that I proclaimed the Good News to you the first time (4:12b-13).** Apparently, **Paul** had not intended to evangelize that territory, but to go on to another place, but going through the lowlands of Pamphylia, a region through which **he** had just passed on **his** way to Pisidian Antioch, where an oriental **eye** disease called ophthalmia was prevalent. So, the inference should be clear that **he** needed a new pair of **eyes**. **Paul** mentions that **if possible, they would have torn out their eyes and given them to him (4:15). His** words in **6:11, "Notice the large letters – I am writing to you with my own hand,"** confirm this, the large Greek letters being necessary because of **his** impaired vision. However, it must have made **him** somewhat repulsive in appearance, because **he** commended **the Galatians** for the way **they** received **him** in spite of the way **he** looked. **And though my physical condition was a trial to you, you did not hate or reject me. No, you welcomed me as a messenger of God** (see the commentary on **Acts Bq – Paul's Message in Lystra**) **– or even as Messiah Yeshua (4:14).**

So, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? He refers to the fact that **he** had told **them the truth**, while **the Judaizers** had told **them** lies. It was probably on the occasion of **his** second visit to **Galatia (Acts 18:23)** that some church members had already come under the influence of **the Judaizers** and had begun to doubt **the truth** of salvation by faith alone, which **they** had learned and accepted from **him**. The doctrine of legalism had become more attractive to **them** than the gospel of grace, and the man who had been **their** friend had become like an **enemy**. **Faithful are the words of a friend, but excessive the kisses of an enemy (Proverbs 27:6). Paul** had proved **his** love to **the Galatians** by telling **them the truth**, but **they** had been deceived. **They** were enjoying **the kisses of**

the Judaizers, not realizing that those **kisses** were leading **them** into bondage and sorrow. **Messiah** made **them His children** and **His heirs**. **They** had not lost **their** salvation (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**), but **they** were rapidly becoming spiritual slaves and beggars.[115] **They** had lost **their joy** in **the Lord; they** had **left [their] first love (Revelation 2:4); they** had lost **the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7).**

Paul told **them** bluntly: **Others [the Judaizers] zealously court you – not in a good way.** In contrast to **his** own frank **truthfulness** in which **he** risked incurring the displeasure of **the Galatians**, **the apostle** told **them** of **the Judaizers'** dishonorable attempt to mislead **them** (see **Bf – O Foolish Galatians, Who has Cast a Spell on You**). Most cults show keen interest and even affection towards prospective members, promising them great personal fulfillment and happiness. But like the legalism of **the Judaizers**, the true nature of **their** spiritual enslavement is hidden. **The Judaizers** had no personal interest in **the Galatian believers** beyond entrapping **them** in legalism. **They** were like the scribes and Pharisees to whom **Yeshua** said: **Woe to you, Torah-teachers and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel over land and sea to make one convert. And when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourself (Matthew 23:15). Paul** spoke directly of **his** conflict with **the Judaizers, his** opponents in the theological battle for the allegiance of the **God**-fearing **Gentiles** in **Galatia**, saying: **They wish to shut you out** from **God's** grace **so that you will court them,** and have nowhere else to turn **(4:16-17).**[116]

It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good. Paul went on to explain. **He himself** had been **zealous** for them when **he first** preached the gospel in **Galatia**. But **his purpose** was **good**, out of a love for **Messiah** and a deep desire to see **them** saved. And such enthusiastic concern was appropriate, and **not just when Paul was there with them (4:18 NIV). He** was not jealous of **the Judaizers**. **He** did not oppose **them** in order to preserve **his** own popularity but to protect **the Galatians** spiritual well-being. **They** were opposed to the glorious, saving gospel of **Yeshua Messiah**.[117]

Speaking like a mother, **Paul** addressed **the Galatian** believers: **My dear children** (Greek: from *teknion*, literally *referring to a small child*)**! They** were acting like infants who refused to be born. **Again, I suffer labor pains.** It's like **he** was saying, "**You** have already experienced a new birth, but now **you** are acting as if

you need to be spiritually born all over again. **You** make me feel like a mother who has to deliver the same baby twice. But however abnormal or tragic **their** spiritual condition, **Paul** would not abandon **them until Messiah was formed in them (4:19).** Being sanctified, being molded **into the image of Messiah** is the goal of every believer. **As you received Messiah Yeshua as Lord, so continue to walk in Him (Colossians 2:6). ADONAI** has **predestined** believers **to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29a). We all, with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory – just as from the Lord, who is the Spirit (Second Corinthians 3:18). The Father** sent **the Son** to earth not only to die that we might be saved but also to live as the **Divine** example for those who are saved.

Paul's wish was that **he could** deal more directly with these issues that would require **him** to **be with the Galatians** in person and be able to **change his tone** with **them**. **He** evidently regretted the severity of **his** language on the occasion of **his** second visit to **the Galatian** churches **(Acts 18:23)** at which time **he** had warned **them** personally in order that **he** might talk to **them** in a more tender and affectionate manner, however, still telling **them** the truth. **For I don't know what to make of you (4:20). He** was literally at **his** wits' end. **He** could not understand how **they** could have been taught the gospel so well, believed it so genuinely, and then appeared to abandon it so quickly (see **Aj – No Other Gospel**).[118]

Every believer experiences times when we come to an impasse and find our own resources are completely exhausted. After saying and doing everything under the sun to those we are trying to help – sometimes believers . . . sometimes unbelievers – they remain completely out of reach and sometimes even turn against us. In such times, we need to move over and let **the Holy Spirit** take the wheel of the situation, with a clear conscience, and knowing that we have done everything in our power. **God** is **God** and we are not.

Paul trusted **the Holy Spirit** to work in all things-in his health and in the hearts of the Galatians. He did not complain when he had a physical ailment, but he sought **God's** help and looked at the situation from **His** eyes. **I pleaded with the Lord three times about this, that it might leave me. But He said to me," My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly in my weakness, so that the power of Messiah may dwell in me. For Messiah's sake, then, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in calamities. For**

when I am weak, then I am strong (Second Corinthians 12:8-10).

Paul knew that his life was not in the hands of anyone, whether a boss, person, spouse or friend, nor in the hands of a disease or even of a doctor; but **his** life was in the hands of **the Almighty, Sovereign God, Ruler of the Universe, Controller of the Future** – who cares passionately for each detail in **His** child's life.

*Dear **Father God**, I praise **You** when problems come and I look up, I see **Your** loving face and feel **Your** arms of love tight around me. Though the trials/ problems still hurt, I am comforted by knowing that **You** are working in my life to refine me and bring greater glory to **Yourself**, just as **You** have always done in the lives of each of **Your** children. **You** are the best daddy! **You** delight in guiding circumstances into **Your** child's life that will polish them to shine great for **You** **(First Peter 1:7)** and bring them great joy for all eternity.*

*Praise **You** that just as a potter takes a lump of clay and fashions it into a beautiful vessel, so **You, Father God,** take us as **Your** jars of clay **(Second Corinthians 4:7)** who came from dust **(Genesis 2:7** and **3:19)** and mold us to be more like **You**. We can move from frustration because of trials – to peace and contentment in problems, for **now we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, (Romans 8:28 a-b).** And **we also boast in our suffering – knowing that suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope (Romans 5:3b-4).***

*Dear **Daddy**, the best gift that **You** could give us in any trial is **Yourself**, and how wonderful that **You** what **You** have given us – **Your** abiding presence Always with us **for God himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5).** There will never come a trial that we will have to go thru alone- for **You** are right there with us **(Hebrews 13:5)**.*
***And hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Ruach ha-Kodesh who was given to us (Romans 5:5).** That is such a wonderful comfort – **You** always with us, polishing us for your glory! Praise **You**! Thank **You**! Love **You**! In **Your** Holy **Son's** name and power of resurrection. Amen*