

“God’s Truth and Paul’s Heart”

Christian Liberty

Galatians 4:8-20

Don Maurer

August 26, 2016

Don: Very good. I’ve got a riddle for everyone.

Men: Okay.

Don: Knock, knock.

Men: Who’s there?

Don: I’m a broken pencil.

Men: I’m a broken pencil who?

Don: Never mind; it’s pointless. (*Groans, laughter, applause.*) Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much.

The Lord be with you.

Men: And also with you.

Don: Let us pray. Father, we come before You, thanking You for another day that You’ve given us. Indeed, Lord, this is the day that You have made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Father, we thank You once again for the opportunity of gathering together to hear Your word preached. Father, I pray that You would help me to say only what Your word says, and nothing else. Thank You for the new men here. Thank You for everyone here. We pray, Father, as Bruce says so many times, that You would open Your word, that we may behold You more clearly for Christ’s sake. And it’s in His name that we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Don: Okay. Well, we’re continuing our study today in Galatians. I’ve entitled it “God’s Truth and Paul’s Heart.” I have a feeling that we may go a little over time today. So whoever has to leave may leave. Whoever can stay may stay. As Dick said last week, I appreciate you hanging in there.

Okay, let me give just a brief review of where we’ve come from. In chapter 1 of Galatians Paul said that he was surprised that the Galatians were turning to another gospel. He warns of the damnation of those preaching another gospel, which we need to be very aware of. In this case, it’s the Judaizers.

Then Paul begins to give his bio, his credentials, the reason that he can say the bold things that he has just said.

Then we go into chapter 2. He continues with his ministry and his credentials and his bio. He rebukes Peter for his relapse or his misunderstanding of the gospel of grace. And it’s a lengthy rebuke. Peter may not have gotten over the experience that he had in Acts chapter ten, when the Lord told him to eat that which was formerly unclean or common. It’s a lengthy rebuke, talking about the fact that we’re not saved by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

And then in chapter three, Paul again plays hard ball, expressing shock that the Galatians are bewitched. “*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?*” And then he stresses justification by faith alone, going back to Abraham in Genesis 12. He contrasts

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the law with the promise, and assures the Galatians that through faith in Christ they are all sons of God in Christ Jesus, without regard to ethnicity, social status or sex. And of course we know that Jonathan Watt and Mark Robinson and Dick Jenkins did a very good job in regard to that.

And then we come to the next section, chapter 4 verses 1-7, which Dick Jenkins taught last week. We’re no longer slaves, but sons. I don’t know if Dick is here today. But I’d like to tease him a little bit, because he said, “I don’t want Don to get to this next section about adoption.” Well, little did he realize that I could just address it again. (*Laughter.*) So that’s what I’m going to do. (*Laughter.*)

Christ came in the fullness of time. He was born of a woman. He came in the fullness of time to redeem those under the law. And of course Dick did a very good job of talking about the Incarnation of Christ, that He became man, and about His active and passive obedience. His active obedience was living the life that we have not lived, that we could not live, in our place, and His passive obedience, His suffering and death on the cross. As a result, we are adopted as sons. And through the Spirit we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

On your handout you have chapter twelve of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which really sums up adoption very well. Adoption is one of those neglected doctrines of the church and it’s a shame that that’s the case. Let me just read this for you.

“All those who are justified God vouchsafed”—that is, He condescended; He granted to us—“in and for His only Son, Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, ‘Abba! Father!’, are pitied, protected, provided for and chastened by Him, as by a father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises of everlasting salvation.”

Let me comment briefly on this. If you are a son, God has made you an heir. And let me just comment here on what that means.

It means that we are “taken into the number.” We’re part of the saints. We’re no longer a part of the ain’ts, as John MacArthur says. We are taken into the number. We are part of the elect. We are children of God by the grace of adoption. And it is a grace that God gives us.

We “enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God.” And the authors of the Confession elaborate on these. Here are some of them.

We have His name put upon us. Isaiah says that “your name shall no longer be Desolate, but Beautiful.” The Hebrew word is Hephzibah. We have the name of the sons of God, the name of Christian.

We “receive the Spirit of adoption.” We receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee for the day of redemption.

We “have access to the throne of grace with boldness,” as the author of Hebrews tells us. What a great and wonderful privilege that is, that we have access to God 24/7, with boldness. Not arrogance, but boldness. Praise God for that.

We are enabled to cry, “Abba! Father!”, as Dick Jenkins talked about so well last week. *Abba*, that Aramaic term, that term of endearment—Father, Papa, dear Father. I

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think we could say, “Daddy” in our day and age. What a tremendous thing that we can call our God, the God of the universe, not just Judge, not just the Lord, but Father—the same word that Jesus used the night He was in Gethsemane. Abba! Father! What a tremendous thing that is!

We are “pitied.” God looked at us in our low estate and pitied us because of our sin and brought us to Himself, into the kingdom of His marvelous Son, Jesus Christ.

We are “protected.” Jesus said that none shall perish, that “no one shall be snatched out of My hand.” We are protected from the evil one. Indeed, that’s what Christ prayed in His high priestly prayer. *“Father, I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would protect them from the evil one.”*

We are “provided for” in every way—physically, spiritually, materially, emotionally and eternally.

We are “chastened by Him, as by a father,” not by a judge that we’re afraid of, but by a Father who loves us, yet never cast off. Jesus said, *“He who comes to Me I will never cast out.”* But we are “sealed to the day of redemption,” and we “inherit the promises of everlasting salvation.” What a glorious thing to contemplate!

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: That was an amazing statement, and it’s no more than six lines long. And I counted thirteen Scriptural provisions that come to us through adoption.

Don: Isn’t that amazing?

Participant: We could take a whole week to study each one of these.

Don: Oh absolutely, Ted, yes. For sure, absolutely. So your point is well taken—the richness of the word of God.

Okay. Well let’s go now to the lesson for today, Galatians 4, verses 8-20. I’m going to read from the New King James Version. If it was good enough for the apostles, it’s good enough for me. *(Laughter.)* Just kidding, just kidding. *(Laughter.)* All right. Here we go.

“But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those by nature which are not gods. But now, after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you return again to the weak and beggarly elements of which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

“Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. 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. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

“They zealously court you, but for no good. Yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.

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“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.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Don: Amen and Amen. All right. In verses 8 and 9, Paul says this. “Formerly you did not know God and you served those which by nature are not gods.” These Galatians did not know God. Now it is not politically correct in our culture today to tell someone that he or she doesn’t know God, or to suggest or even insinuate that someone may not know God. If you are talking to somebody who you know is a Muslim or a Buddhist or something, or is an atheist, or someone who perhaps does not give evidence that he is in the faith, and you would insinuate or imply that they don’t know God, they could get very, very mad at you.

But Paul says this here about the Galatians. In Ephesians 2 he says that those he was writing to before their conversion were “*without hope and without God in the world.*” And so it is with us before we were born again, whenever that may have taken place, whether at age three or four, or forty or eighty.

And they “*served those which by nature are not gods.*” The people Paul was addressing worshiped idols, which according to Psalm 115 “*have eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear, noses but do not smell,*” etc. And it says, “*Those who make them are like them.*” In other words, they are dead in their sins. And of course most of the time when idol worship was performed, they also committed sexual immorality in addition, as a part of these orgies that went along with that.

Now last week Dick pointed this out and said that it was a form of slavery and that it was empty, that it was futile. Now what about today? Are we any different? We think that we’re more sophisticated because we don’t bow down before statues. At least I don’t think most of us do.

We’re just more sophisticated, that’s all. And Dick had a whole list of today’s idols that people are enslaved to, right?—fame, success, sex, material wealth, modern conveniences, drugs, you name it.

And they promise freedom with these things, but it doesn’t result in freedom, does it? It results in bondage, in emptiness, futility. You know, both Peter and Paul in their epistles—Paul particularly—talks about “their minds being darkened” and “their minds being futile.” And Paul says in Ephesians that we’re not to behave and conduct ourselves in the futile ways that were handed down by our fathers.

I remember that last week Sig was talking about the fact that on the talk shows that he and his wife were watching they had these stars who were just talking about themselves, and just how empty it all was. I also remember that Tony Dungee’s son attempted to commit suicide because of the emptiness of his life. The same thing with Kurt Cobain of Nirvana.

I remember in the late ‘60s that there was a song by Peggy Lee called “Is That All There Is?”, where she went through her life and all the experiences she had and it was all nothing. “Is that all there is to life?” And then, of course, Kansas’s “Dust in the Wind” came almost a decade later.

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These Galatians, and we also, were formerly enslaved in this state. *“But now.”* Two little words of tremendous significance. But now a change has taken place, as in Romans 3:21. Paul goes on after talking about the terrible state that we were in before Christ and talks about the coming of Christ.

Paul says, *“But now, after you have known God, or rather are known by Him.”* Stop there. From Paul’s first visit to the Galatians, he was satisfied that they had apparently received Christ and therefore had known God.

And remember, to know God means not just to be aware of His existence, but intimacy, affection, very deep knowledge.

You know, yesterday I was listening to Mike Pintek, the talk show host on KDKA. And he was talking about the fact that a survey from the Pew Research Center was taken. There are now people who call themselves “nones”—not Roman Catholic nuns, not the women who have that profession—but “nones,” who not only have left the church but have renounced faith in God. And Mike Pintek was saying, “Well, you know, I was raised Catholic. I no longer attend church. But I believe in God.”

Well what exactly does that mean? Obviously, I can’t finally judge whether he knows God or not. “I don’t go to church. I don’t have any use for organized religion. But I believe in God.” It’s very interesting, to say the least.

When we know God, it doesn’t just mean believing that He exists. That’s part of it, obviously. But we know Him. We love Him. It’s a deep affection. Christ calls the church—He calls us—His body, His bride. That’s something that we men can’t really relate to. It’s staggering! As Dick said last week, it is the most intimate relationship in the universe. It’s just mind boggling! Christ said in John 10, *“I know My sheep and My sheep know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father.”* That is absolutely mind boggling! But it’s precious!

But then Paul goes on. And he adds that it’s really not so much the case that we know God, but rather that God knows us.

Participant: Amen.

Don: We are known, we are loved by God. How many times has Bruce said this. The question isn’t do you know Jesus, but does Jesus know you? On Judgment Day there’s that dreadful pronouncement He’s going to make to many people when He says, *“I never knew you.”* We must never forget that we know and love God because He first knew and loved us. There are Scriptures here. Let’s see. Dick Johnson, would you read 1 John 4:10, please?

Dick: Sure. *“In this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

Don: Okay. Thank you.

Participant: Amen.

Don: Yes, amen. Dick Clouser, 1 John 4:19, please?

Dick: *“We love Him because He first loved us.”*

Don: Absolutely. All right. Now assuming that this was true of the Galatians, that they were really converted and saved, Paul once again, as in chapters 1 and 3, expresses his shock. He plays hard ball here with the Galatians. He expresses his shock that they could

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be so enslaved all over again according to verse 9. *“How is it that you return again to the weak and beggarly elements)—some translations say “worthless elements”—“which you desire again to be in bondage?”*

Now obviously, the question is this. What were these weak and beggarly elements? Last week Dick made a good case that these were referring not to the law, particularly the ceremonial law, but to the paganism of their old way of life. Now I think that may have been the case, though I want to respectfully disagree with him there. I don’t want to send mixed signals. But the whole book of Galatians is concerned with the Judaizing heresy, right? And Luther, Calvin, Matthew Henry and William Hendrickson all believe that this is what Paul is referring to. He’s referring to the Judaizing heresy and the enslavement to Jewish custom and law here as a means of justification and earning favor with God. Granted, they are warned later on not to use their freedom to indulge in sexual immorality. They may have been tempted to return to that portion of their pagan ways. But I think that here it’s talking specifically about the enslavement to Jewish customs.

Now what I believe Paul was saying is this. It doesn’t matter whether you want to be enslaved to pagan rituals, or Judaistic rituals, or anything else. It all amounts to the same thing, doesn’t it? It’s self-justification, earning favor before God. Paul equates both of these things here—pagan rituals and Old Testament Jewish rituals.

Don’t we see this today in the religions of the world—Islam, Buddhism, take your pick. And even we have to be very careful. Yes, we need the means of grace. Yes, we need to go to church. We are to be very active in the body of Christ, reading our Bibles, praying, all of these kinds of things. But if we look to those things as in any way earning our favor with God, then we’ve fallen into that category too, haven’t we?

Now in verse 10 Paul laments the fact that these people are observing days and months and seasons and years. Perhaps these are pagan festivals. But more likely these are Jewish festivals, like Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the Passover, the Feast of Booths, etc., in order to be right with God.

Now incidentally, the Puritans used this verse to justify banning the observance of Christmas, Good Friday and other festivals that were part of the church calendar at that time. Now let me just say this. If we observe these “holy days” to earn favor with God, if we think that will bring us justification, that’s wrong, and we shouldn’t do it. That’s the thing that I have against the Roman Catholic Church, making these holy days of obligation and a sin if you do not attend.

However, I have to say that I don’t believe that it’s wrong in and of itself, because the same apostle Paul in Romans 14:5-6 says that *“he who observes the day observes it to the Lord and gives thanks to God.”* It works both ways. Sig, would you read that passage in Colossians there, 2:16 and 17 and 20-22?

Sig: Certainly. *“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival, or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come. But the substance is of Christ. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations? ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men?”*

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Don: All right. So it works both ways. Whether it’s pagan festivals—and you see this even in certain Eastern religions today—well, I can’t eat this. I can’t do this. There are even certain Christian sects where you can’t use electricity or drive cars, or whatever. Or the Jewish regulations that the Galatians were probably tempted to go back to—the dietary laws of the Old Testament. No, let no one judge you in that regard—what you eat or drink, or the observance of Sabbaths, Jewish Old Testament feast days, etc.

On the other hand, don’t judge somebody in this regard. “Oh, you can’t put that Christmas tree in your home. That’s pagan! You can only listen to Christian music. You can’t listen to any kind of secular music. That doesn’t glorify God.” No, no, no, no! It works both ways. We have to remember that we have liberty in Christ. That’s very important.

Now we go to number four, *Paul’s heart and concern for the Galatians*. Beginning in verse 11 and going to verse 20, Paul demonstrates that he has the heart of a pastor. He admonishes his people, but he also has tender affection for them.

You know, it galls me when people, particularly liberals in the Christian church, refer to Paul as this hard individual who was anti-women. And today, of course, a lot of people say he was anti-gay because of his talking about homosexuality. Oh, how harsh he was!

But nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, he uses irony. He uses sarcasm. He even does it here in this passage that we’re going to talk about. But his warm and tender affection for these people, his concern for their spiritual welfare, just jumps out at me.

You know, even though it sounds in verses 11 and 20 like he’s saying, “I wonder. Have I labored for you in vain? I have my doubts about you.” It sounds as if he is doubting their salvation. But in other parts of this epistle he does seem to genuinely regard them as believers, as brothers. And he has that very affectionate tone. He’s very concerned about their spiritual welfare, as any good pastor would be and should be.

He says, “*I urge you to become like me.*” What does he mean by that? Not necessarily that they would become pastors or teachers. But “I urge you to trust Christ alone for your salvation and your justification. Stop believing the heresy of the Judaizers.” He says, “*For I became like you.*” Once he became like them—hardhearted, trusting in his Judaism and his status as a Pharisee, so much so that he was even willing to persecute and kill Christians.

On his first visit to them, he preached to them because, or in the midst of a physical illness, a physical infirmity. Now we don’t know what it was. All kinds of speculations have come up, like epilepsy and that kind of thing. A very common speculation is that he had some kind of eye ailment which made him look unsightly and would have filled people with contempt, so that, according to one commentary, they would have spit in his face.

Participant: What did you refer to that as, Don?

Don: An eye ailment.

Participant: Is that why he said earlier that “you would gouge your eyes out?”

Don: Very possibly, yes.

Participant: Like they literally knew that he needed a better eye?

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Don: Possibly yes. The people who believed that have guessed that this could be some kind of eye ailment. You know, in other letters he writes, *“See with what large letters I write to you.”* And then of course we also know about his thorn in the flesh. That may have been what he was referring to; I don’t know.

But despite this, the Galatians didn’t regard him with contempt. On the contrary, Paul said that they welcomed him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus Himself. Imagine that!

Now the word *angel* can also mean “messenger.” Paul was a messenger of the truth of God, even as Christ Jesus Himself. Not that they worshiped Paul, but apparently at first the Galatians had a deep affection for Paul as their pastor.

Now that’s how we should regard our pastors and teachers as well. They labor hard in doctrine. They labor hard in the preaching of the Word. And Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17 says that they are *“worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”* Do we pray for our pastors? Do we encourage them? Or do we fall into the habit of having roast pastor for lunch every Sunday? (*Laughter.*)

You know, Jay was telling me on the way over that he had gotten into a conversation with someone recently about a sermon that his pastor had preached. You know, we’ve got to be very careful about that. It’s obviously not that they’re above criticism. But let’s make sure that we encourage and pray for our pastors just like these people in Galatia had done.

They loved him so much that they would have even plucked out or gouged their eyes, if necessary. Again, as Sig pointed out, this is why some people believe that this infirmity was some kind of loathsome eye disease.

But sadly, now their attitude had changed because of the false teachers in their midst, because of the Judaizers. Paul asks this very poignant question in verse 16. *“Have I now become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”* Is this what it has come down to? How sad that must have made Paul after all the time and work and effort that he had invested in these people!

Proverbs 27:6 says, *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”* The Bible has a lot to say about the dangers of false flattery. A faithful pastor will preach the whole counsel of God, not just what people want to hear. A faithful pastor will preach love and wrath, mercy and judgment, heaven and hell, not because he wants to be mean or pompous, but because of love for his flock. That’s very, very important.

You know, Paul said in 2 Timothy that the time will come when people will not want to hear sound doctrine, but they will have pastors who will satisfy their itching ears, telling them what they want to hear. And how common this is in many churches today. And the pressure for a pastor to please the congregation is enormous. It really is. And there are pastors who say, “I won’t preach the doctrine of election, or that Christ is the only way to God, because that will offend people.” No, a good pastor will preach the whole counsel of God.

All right. Now in verse 17 Paul turns his attention to these false teachers. *“They”—the Judaizers—“zealously court you.”* Other translations say that they *“make much of you, but for no good.”*

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Now *courting* is an old English term for wooing a potential marriage partner. I guess dating is how it would best be described today—the engagement period. Remember those days, guys?

So it was with these false teachers, and all false teachers throughout the ages. Oh, they’re zealous! They court you. They make much of you, but for no good purpose.

You know, I heard yesterday on Al Mohler’s commentary—and there’s an article in USA Today about this—that ISIS is now luring children to become suicide bombers. They lure them with candy and ice cream and all the things that kids like in order to recruit them later to become suicide bombers. How horrible! How unbelievable!

I had a teacher at Blind and Visual Rehabilitation Services who is a Mormon. And he said that the reason he became a Mormon was because they were very friendly to him, and made him feel loved and welcome. Shame on us if we don’t do that, by the way, with people who we have come to evangelize and who come to our churches.

I remember whenever I was growing up that there was a program on the radio on several stations called “The World Tomorrow.” No, it wasn’t a soap opera. (*Laughter.*) It was a program that was sponsored by The Worldwide Church of God. I didn’t know this at the time, but I found out later. It featured Herbert W. Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong. Oh, my goodness! He was a great speaker. I used to listen to that program. It might as well have been a soap opera because I was so addicted to it. It was on in Pittsburgh, and then at night it was on in Wheeling, W.Va., and Richmond, Va., all over the dial. And this guy was just very persuasive and convincing. I was getting something from him that I wasn’t getting from the religious tradition that I was raised in.

And oh, my goodness, I ate it up! I wanted to subscribe—and I can’t believe my parents let me do this, but they did—I subscribed to the “Plain Truth Magazine,” and got a lot of their books. And then I found out that my next door neighbor, a woman, had also gotten involved in this. It was unbelievable!

So one time a pastor from the church, somebody from Ambassador College in Pasadena, Ca., came to visit her. I went over there. And then, praise God, the Lord opened my eyes. On the radio they didn’t mention that they were part of an organization called The Worldwide Church of God. That’s how they lured people. They didn’t mention that they didn’t believe in the Trinity. They didn’t mention that if you were to become part of their organization that you could no longer eat certain foods, or celebrate Christmas. That was the thing that I didn’t like. I could no longer celebrate Christmas! (*Laughter.*) A silly thing, but God used it, and praise God that He did!

So Paul says, “*These people court you for no good purpose.*” They want to exclude you, all right. They want to isolate you, that you may be zealous for them.

Isn’t that the trait or the characteristic of many cults? They isolate you from your family. They isolate you from normal life. “We want you to hang around with us. Don’t hang around with that false apostle Paul,” the Judaizers would say. “We don’t want you to be influenced.” There are many cults that deprive people of family contact, or sleep to get them into a state where they will only listen to them. Apparently this was happening with the Galatians.

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And then in verse 18 Paul says that “*it is good to be zealous in a good thing, always.*” Men, I hope that you are zealous for Jesus Christ, not lukewarm like the Laodiceans.

Isn’t it strange that people in our culture say, “You don’t want to be a fanatic! Don’t be a religious fanatic!” The family of a friend of mine came to my church once, and afterwards he asked them, “What did you think of the service and our church?”

And this person said, “You’re too committed. You’re over-committed.” (*Laughter.*) Isn’t it strange in our culture that it’s totally acceptable—in fact, you’re looked at as kind of weird if you’re not—it’s totally acceptable to be a football fanatic, right? That’s fine! Or you can be a fanatic about politics or politicians. But don’t be a religious fanatic. Oh no, don’t be too overboard. Don’t be too committed to Jesus Christ.

Participant: Hey, Don?

Don: Yes, Sig?

Sig: A curious thought with you expounding on this letter is that when Paul puts this together, and he sends it out, and however it goes from where he wrote it to the Galatians, unlike our present day technology, I send an email to a friend or a business associate and I’m impatient if I don’t hear back soon. When I don’t get a reply, I have a question. And Paul poses some pretty strong language here. And I’m wondering. Didn’t he say at the end that he longed to be there with them?

Don: Yes.

Sig: I’m just wondering. How do you sit sending something like this out not knowing the response you get? It would have taken months, I would think, right, before—

Don: Oh yes, easily. Sure. Yes, well that just shows Paul again, the pastor’s heart that Paul has, for sure. How anxious, how concerned he must have been, lifting them up night and day in prayer. So your point is well taken, Sig, absolutely.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes, Ted?

Ted: I’m just picking up on that very briefly. Continued reaction from people is very important to communication. It’s more for some of us than others, I think. I really depend on it. So if I’m teaching in front of Brave Men, I’m looking at everybody. And they’re communicating to me by their eyes. And what I say and the level at which I say it has a lot to do with what I’m seeing.

Don: Yes. For all I know, the rest of you could be asleep, huh? (*Laughter. Someone snores. More laughter.*) Go ahead, Ted. Sorry.

Ted: Maybe you’re not getting any feedback from us. So you and Paul must have great confidence in your message regardless of the reaction.

Don: Absolutely. Yes.

Ted: You’re getting no feedback at all—I mean minimal.

Don: Right. Sure. And of course Paul often got negative reaction, didn’t he? But you’re absolutely right. You have to be very confident in the message that you are putting forth. That’s for sure.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: You didn’t like one of my little poems.

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Don: I didn’t?

Second Participant: No, no, no! Please, it’s not going to happen! *(Laughter.)*

Participant: I have something that I don’t think you’d argue with. It’s called “Thanatopsis.” It’s a ninety-one line poem. *(Laughter.)* But I’ll only read the last nine lines, which say,

“So live, that when thy summons comes,

To join that innumerable caravan

Where each shall take his chamber,

And the silent palls of death,

Thou wilt not, like the quarry slave,

Scourge through a dungeon at night,

Assumed and sustained by an informing trust,

Approach thy grave like one who wraps a drapery of his couch about him,

And lies down in pleasant dreams.”

And I left out two words, “the mysterious realm.” And I didn’t know that until I recited it to a man who is now deceased. And he said, “Dale, you left out two words.”

Well I said, “Where are they?”

And he said, “Well, go put it in “Thanatopsis” and you can tell. And I left it out because yes, there is a glorious hereafter that we can’t even imagine.

Don: Amen, brother.

Dale: Also, an awful hell that we don’t want to go to.

Don: Yes. Dale, I’m impressed. I can’t believe you memorized that. That is amazing to me.

Participant: Don’t encourage him. *(Laughter.)*

Don: By the way, is Thanatopsis the opposite of Thanabottomsis? *(Laughter.)* Okay, that was bad.

Participant: Boo!

Don: All right. Well, you know, people talk about radical Islam, right, and all the negative connotations of that. Well, brothers I hope in a good way that we are radical Christians.

Participant: Amen.

Don: That we are sold out to Jesus Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Don: Amen, indeed! And as our culture continues the downward spiral, it may become more evident who is a radical Christian in the years to come.

Participant: If we’re not radical about Jesus, we’re radical about something else.

Don: You got it, Bishop. Absolutely.

Participant: We have to be radical with love.

Don: Indeed!

Participant: I find that very difficult.

Don: Yes indeed, Dale. We have to be radical with love for sure, because love is radical, isn’t it?

Participant: Well, the love of God is radical.

“God’s Truth and Paul’s Heart”

Don: Very much so, Sig. Thank you. You better believe it. The Galatians were probably acting one way when Paul was with them, but in another when he was not. And he points that out. “Be zealous for what is good, not just when I’m present with you, but when I’m absent as well.” We can imagine that they were going along with him when he was there, but talking behind his back when he wasn’t, having roast pastor again, as it were. “Boy, we don’t really believe that! He’s teaching heresy!” Whatever. We’ve got to be careful with that ourselves, don’t we?

And then in verses 19 and 20, he affectionately pleads with them again. He calls them “*little children*”, a term of affection. Jesus referred to His disciples this way. There is irony in Paul’s address. There’s affection mixed with a little bit of sanctified sarcasm. He says, “I’m in labor! I’m in birth pains until Christ is formed in you!” And that for a second time, because he was obviously laboring for them the first time when he was visiting them too.

The potential apostasy of these Galatians caused Paul great pain and sorrow and anguish. We read about it in 2 Corinthians 12—his daily concern for the churches on top of all the other persecutions that he was suffering. Again, that’s the heart of a pastor, isn’t it? That’s the same apostle Paul who said that he would be willing, if it were possible, to go to hell and to forfeit his salvation if it would mean that his fellow Israelites—and these are his enemies, by the way. These are people who want to kill him all the time. But that they could be saved. That’s the heart of a pastor. He is anxious to visit the Galatians. That’s the heart of Paul, zealously preaching the truth of God. Any final questions or comments?

Participant: Don, when he talks in 19, when Paul says in verse 19, “I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.”

Don: Yes.

Participant: I guess it would be a good reference to what in modern-day churches would be referred to as Christian formation—that it takes time for us to become sanctified. I know you refer to it as sanctification. But it takes time for us to be formed in our relationship with Christ—to grow, mature, all those kinds of connotations.

Don: Right.

Participant: Is that what he’s referring to?

Don: I would think so. Of course, I know that he is so concerned about what could happen to them if they do defect from the truth. And so I don’t know if he’s referring to the fact that maybe he has doubts about their salvation, whether they were ever saved. But I think that you could also be right. Be mature. Become mature in Christ. We all have different rates of growth, do we not, in the Christian life? For sure! So good point, Sig. A very good point.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Dr. Tony Evans writes that love is sacrifice.

Don: Indeed, Bill. That says it so well, doesn’t it? And Paul had that sacrificial heart. He demonstrated what he said in 1 Corinthians 13 about the characteristics of love with the Galatians.

“God’s Truth and Paul’s Heart”

Participant: Hey, Don?

Don: Yes, Dick?

Dick: The reality there, though, is that he is preaching to the Galatians, and the elect are the elect. So he’s not going to change those who are not elect to be elect, and vice versa. But I assume that what he’s doing is he is encouraging those who are the elect to grow deeper in this intimacy or knowledge of God. Is that correct?

Don: Yes, absolutely. Very, very good, Dick. I like that. And he does that in all his epistles. Thank you.

Okay, brothers. Why don’t we end in a word of prayer? Boy, this time has gone so fast!

Our Father and our God, once again we thank You for the truth of Your word. Lord, there is just so much here. And I’m sure that I’ve only scratched the surface. But Father, we thank You for the pastor’s heart that was exhibited in the apostle Paul. And we thank You for our pastors, Lord Jesus as well. And we pray that we would have hearts for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, and indeed those who are outside, Father, that we would zealously proclaim Your truth and be sold out, radically sold out, to Jesus Christ. It’s in His name that we pray. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” (*Applause.*)