

**Grace Didn't Die
Why do you love?
Galatians 4:11-20**

Introduction: In the Gospel's Jesus used an occasion to help illustrate the difference between himself and the many others who claimed to be leading people to God. Jesus said,

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10:11-15)

There's a lot we could talk about in that passage, but what I want you to see right now is that at the end of the day the most notable difference between Jesus and everybody else claiming to lead God's people was the love Jesus has for the people He's leading! The hired hand leads the sheep first and foremost for his own benefit, however, the good shepherd leads the sheep for the benefit of the sheep, to the point the good shepherd lays his life down for the sheep. This is clearly Jesus teaching us that He has come to die to rescue us from the curse of sin, but it can't be missed that he's also teaching us why - He sincerely loves us and wants us to have life!

Similarly, in our study through the meat of the groundbreaking letter to the churches in Galatia, we find a break from the intense academic driven arguments to try and build an intellectual framework for the believers in Galatia to run from religion and into a relationship with God by the grace of Christ through faith. It still builds the argument, but the method is no longer a doctrinally driven proof but rather a truly personal appeal. As such, Paul gives us two contrasting testimonies that expose the heart of those preaching religion in Jesus' name, with the heart of he and his team who were preaching the actual Gospel of Christ for the sake of Christ's name and the life of those they were preaching it to.

Proposition: Galatians 4:11-20 presents two contrasting testimonies.

The first testimony is in Galatians 4:11-15.

- A. 11 I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. 12 Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. 13 You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, 14 and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. 15 What then has become of the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.**
- B. Let's walk back through this passage and examine what Paul just wrote.**

C. 11 I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

1. To do something in vain means the effort you put into something is wasted. I love fresh vegetables, especially ones I've grown. I used to plant 240 feet of yellow corn every year, typically something like "Bodacious" that had a real high sugar level. However, I finally gave up. It wasn't that I couldn't grow it, as a matter of fact, I grew some of the best corn you could ever see and taste, but, after three years in a row of not getting to eat any of it, I decided it wasn't worth it. After all the hours I had to spend plowing, planting, fertilizing, cultivating the rows with a manual push plow and a hoe, spraying each individual ear to keep it from getting infected by worms, and the list goes on and on; after all of that work that resulted in every stalk of corn having at least two beautiful ears of corn growing on it, we didn't get to eat anything because the deer, ground hogs, squirrels and racoons ate it all before we could ever harvest it! All that work was in vain; wasted!
2. So listen, when Paul says he's afraid he may have labored over them in vain, he is saying he is broken hearted at the idea that all he did for them ("over them") may have been for nothing.
3. Martin Luther wrote, "**These words of Paul breathe tears.**"¹
4. He's less upset that all his labor is being tossed aside than he is broken hearted for the ones who are leaving the Gospel for worthless religion.
5. The labor he did "over" them was no small thing. The word he uses means to labor to the point of exhaustion. Paul had two missionary journeys through the province of Galatia. The first was before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 13 and 14) and the second was after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:36 - 16:6). The purpose of the second missionary journey was to make it real clear to the believers in Galatia, and other places, that the Church in Jerusalem, which was home to the Apostles and led by James the brother of Jesus, had not only agreed with them that you did not have to become Jewish to be saved, but also commissioned them to declare this agreement. However, apparently sometime after the second missionary journey people from the church in Jerusalem, who were likely deeply offended by the results of the Council at Jerusalem, went on missionary journeys not preaching that a person had to be Jewish to be saved, but rather if a person wanted to mature in their faith, experience spiritual power and truly bring glory to God, they needed to become Jewish, and as such, follow the Laws God gave Moses for the Jewish people (more on that in a minute).

¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 123). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

6. My point here is that neither of these journeys were easy. Not only were they traveling by foot over long distances that took months to traverse, they were also dependent upon the hospitality of others for food and shelter. Paul did do work to support himself; however, you couldn't just show up in a town and establish a business, therefore, don't overestimate Paul's ability to produce income as a tent maker.² Life was hard on the road, real hard, and they had few resources to make it happen.
7. In addition, on his first missionary journey Paul and his team dealt with constant attacks. For instance, a group of Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who rejected that Jesus was the Messiah, were literally following them from town to town stirring up trouble. In Lystra their divisiveness resulted in the people trying to execute Paul. They stoned him, then drug him out of the city and left him there assuming he was dead. They weren't even going to bury him; they drug his body out of the city to let the vultures have him!
8. So when Paul writes that he fears he labored in vain over them, he's not talking about some sort of mild investment of his time being tossed aside, he's talking about the fact he suffered massively for them, even risking his life on his very first missionary journey to circle back through cities, including Lystra, that had already persecuted him and run him off (Acts 14:21-23).
9. And this is where this passage is honestly kind of shocking. If I were Paul, I would be mad as fire! I was ready to kill every deer in Lowell, NC after they ate my corn, but Paul isn't nearly as mad as he is broken hearted. Paul truly loves these people and therefore its tearing him apart that they are walking away from that which brings life (the Gospel) for that which doesn't (religion). Therefore, he writes,

D. 12 Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.

1. Despite how this verse might first sound, this isn't an egocentric statement. Remember the context. The missionaries from Jerusalem are trying to convince the believers in Galatia to become Jewish so that their Christianity can be fully blessed by God; so that they can experience true spiritual power and truly honor God.
2. D.K. Campbell put it this way, **“Become free from the Law as I am, for after my conversion I became like the Gentiles, no longer living under**

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/what-the-tentmaking-business-was-really-like-for-the-apostle-paul/>

the Law.” The irony, however, was that the Galatian Gentiles were putting themselves under the Law *after* their conversions.”³

3. Therefore, Paul reminds them that he, who once was the premier example of a person committed to Judaism, practiced none of it when he was with them, nor did he use his past to proclaim that he was somehow superior to them. As a matter of fact, he made it clear that, by his own past religious works of the Law of Moses, he had no more righteousness before God than they did as total pagans.
4. In saying this Paul is not only giving a theological statement, but also a personal one. He’s telling them I didn’t come trying to get you to admire my past religious achievements so that you would try to do them as well, but instead, I came to you as one who clearly proclaimed he had no righteousness and glory apart from that which was graciously given Him through Jesus Christ. As such, he being a Jew, told the pagan Gentiles, that he was one and the same with them! Now this statement is going to contrast BIG TIME with the second testimony I’m going to share with you from this passage, but we will comment more on that later.
5. Paul then dives deeper into this personal connection he had with them.

E. You did me no wrong. 13 You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, 14 and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. 15 What then has become of the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

1. “The last clause of verse 12 belongs with these and the following verses in which Paul related how he was received by the Galatians on his first visit to them (cf. Acts 13–14). At that time he labored under the handicap of **an illness** but remained until he had **preached the gospel** to them. Whatever his infirmity, the Galatians **did not treat** Paul **with contempt or scorn** as a weak messenger but rather received him as one would receive **an angel** or even **Christ Jesus Himself**.”⁴
2. Paul reminds them that he not only labored for them and loves them, but that they labored for him and loved him as well, to the point they were able to look past whatever physical infirmity Paul had, and serve him, instead of scorning him.

³ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Galatians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Galatians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 602). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. Now, we have no idea what was going on with Paul. However, I think the leading opinion is that it was likely some sort of inflammation of his eyes and thus the statement about them being willing to give him their own eyes if they could of. There is a thing called “ophthalmia” that results from previous eye trauma. It can be a pretty grotesque looking thing and its very debilitating to say the least. Many scholars note that some may have even viewed it as a sign that God was separating Himself from Paul, and as such not listened to what Paul had to say; however, the opposite happened. When Paul and his team came through Galatia, they welcomed them in as if they were Angels sent from God.
 4. Paul is making it clear that it wasn’t just he and his team that poured into the people of Galatia, but those who repented and believed in Jesus poured into Paul as well; the point being, they had a genuine mutual connection with one another where they were pouring into each other. They were functioning not as people who were separated or superior, but as the equals before the Lord Paul and his team preached that they were; saved by the same grace to be one people, one family, living life to help each other experience the ETERNAL LIFE of Christ together! It is why Paul, with deep sincerity, calls them “brothers,” despite the fact most of them are gentiles whom most Jews would never under any circumstance identify as family.
- F. So, for your notes, the first testimony we see in Galatians 4:11-20 is of a sincere relationship established out of mutual respect and love for the purpose of helping each other know and follow Christ, and as such, experience His eternal life in abundance! For your notes I put it this way,
- (1) Through the fire, Paul and the believers in Galatia built a deeply sincere and genuinely loving relationship with one another to help each other experience the eternal life of Christ. (4:11-15)**
- A. Everything about their relationship looked like what Jesus prayed for in John 17! The Body of Christ functioning as one body, all brought into the family the same way -- the heavy price of Christ’s bloody death on a cross! No one was treated as any better nor any more deserving, no one felt they had some sort of privilege, or some sort of righteousness over somebody else; rather, each was laboring for one another, building each other up to not only experience their love for one another, but more importantly doing so utterly convinced of God’s love for them and as such growing in the amazing experience of knowing and being known (4:9) by the creator of the universe!
 - B. Unfortunately, however, this was no longer the testimony of the spiritual reality of the Galatian church, nor of their relationship with Paul.

The second testimony in Galatians 4:10-20 totally contrasts with the one in verses 10-15.

(2) Through deception, the Judaizers formed a relationship with the Galatians so that the Galatians would honor them. (4:16-20)

A. Let me read you the passage then we will dig into it.

B. 16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. 18 It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, 19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! 20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

C. 16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

1. What a contrast. Paul is saying, you who were once ready to give me your eyeballs, now consider me an enemy, all because I taught you the Gospel of Jesus Christ that left Gentiles and Jews as equal brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of God. You are angry with me because I taught you the Gospel that removed any excuse for you to not follow the God that so clearly demonstrated His love for you through the death of His Son. I taught you the Gospel that assured you that the Lord welcomed you into His Kingdom, not based on your works, but something much greater, the work of Christ. I taught you the Gospel that led you to understand the truth, that is, that your standing in the Kingdom is based on CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, and as such, you have the highest standing possible!
2. Paul is expressing how utterly baffled and brokenhearted he is that they are now considering him an enemy for teaching them that truth; that GOOD NEWS! How in the world could that have happened? How could things have changed that massively in their relationship!! Spurgeon noted,
3. **"There are many who have incurred enmity through speaking the gospel very plainly, for the natural tendency of man is toward ceremony, toward some form of legal righteousness: he must have something aesthetic, something that delights his sensuous nature, something that he can see and hear, to mix up that with the simplicity of faith. Paul was as clear as noonday against everything of that kind, and so the Galatians got at last to be angry with him."**⁵

⁵ Spurgeon, C. (2013). *Galatians*. (E. Ritzema, Ed.) (Ga 4:16). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

4. In this case, the Judaizers came to town preaching all kinds of religious laws, rituals, festivals, and holy days and weeks; promising that practicing these special things of God would give them favor with the Lord and spiritual power. With great skill, they convinced them that this was the true way to honor God, and the only way to truly be His people! Paul, by the way, preached none of this; so, imagine how angry they were at him for leaving all of this amazing stuff out of his sermons to them! After all, they had suffered persecution with Paul, and yet Paul never told them about all this amazing stuff that was so rich with tradition and Godly heritage that they could do, and as such, earn special standing with God!
 5. Paul then digs into the motives of the ones misleading the believers in Galatia,
- D. 17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.**
1. **K.S. Wuest wrote, "Thus, the idea is that the Judaizers were zealously paying court to the Galatians, attempting to shut them out from the benefits of the gospel in order that they (the Galatians) might have to pay court to the Judaizers, since they would have no refuge for their souls elsewhere."⁶**
 2. You see, the sad irony was that The Law that these Judaizers were convincing these Gentile followers of Jesus to follow was actually given to separate Jews from Gentiles, including Gentile believers! The entire purpose of the Law was for God to set apart the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from all the other ethnic groups on the earth!
 3. **"3 while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: 4 You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.'" (Exodus 19:3-6)**
 4. Others (Gentiles) were allowed in it for sure, but they were never fully a part of it, and as such, the descendants of Jacob were always superior within the culture, and in essence were the envy of all the Gentiles who converted to Judaism. After all, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the

⁶ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 127-128). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

family that God chose and separated out as His own. In addition, remember the purpose of the Law was to separate out the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the prison of world condemned to live in the curse of sin, “until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made” (Galatians 3:19), and as such, free people of every tribe and heritage from the prison to be adopted as His children!

5. Therefore, the end game of the Judaizers trying to get Gentiles to live according to the Law of Moses was not to get the Gentile believers to join them in the Jewish family, as much as it was to get the Gentile believers to admire and honor them; to be committed to the Law that separated out the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as superior to everybody else.
 6. The technique they apparently used to persuade the believers in Galatia was known as flattery. Flattery is a way of making people think you truly love them and have their best interest in mind, when in fact, you are only trying to get them to serve your interest. In the book of Daniel, we find a prophecy that is most likely about Antiochus Epiphanes. In it he talks about how Antiochus and others will use flattery for their own glory. Daniel writes,
 7. **“32 He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. 33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. 34 When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery.” (Daniel 11:31-34)**
 8. In Galatians 4:17 Paul is saying they are not “loving you” to bless you, but rather to shut you out of fellowship with God and with others! They want you to buy into a system that says you don’t get the favor of God like they do, and you don’t get a seat at the table like they do; but you still have to do everything they do! As such, Paul is exposing the fake “love” these Judaizers are showing the people in Galatia for what it is. They are winning you over with flattery so that they can get glory from you and, as such, essentially push you out!
 9. Paul then writes,
- E. 18 It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, 19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!**
1. The imagery of childbirth takes us back to all that Paul went through to lead them to Jesus in the first place! The first missionary journey was brutal,

then he came back again after the Jerusalem Council, and now he's having to go through all that all over again!

2. In calling them "my little children" Paul could not express a deeper sense of love. Parents love their children more than anybody. It's a bond that is unlike any other bond, and therefore for Paul, a grief unlike any other grief. Next Sunday is Mother's Day and then in June we have Father's Day; the purpose of which is to remind all of us to appreciate those who poured themselves into us at a level nobody else did; who worried for us, looked out for us, labored for us, sacrificed for us, and loved us deeper and more intensely than anybody else on the planet. So, think about that, Paul calls these believers "his children," not with some kind of Messiah complex, but rather to demonstrate to them just how much he loves them!
3. But it's also to express just how much grief he is in over their turning away from a relationship with Christ for a relationship with religion! He is in ANGUISH, that is, the pain a woman goes through when she gives birth to a child, because after all this effort, he's back to square one again with them. He's back to having to teach them the basic Gospel all over again; he's back to having to convince them that God's love is unaffected by religious performance or even their sin! Paul is back to having to pry their hands off faith in religious practices and rules, and back to faith in Christ and all He did for us through His death, burial, and resurrection!
4. Paul mixes his metaphors a bit here when he says, "**the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,**" which is to essentially say he's in labor so that Christ would be formed and birthed again in them! R. J. Utley notes, "**until Christ is formed in you**" ... was used in a medical sense for fetal development. ... This text refers to their maturity in Christ ... or in other words, their Christlikeness."⁷
5. Now this is startling, because the Judaizers are saying true Christ likeness comes by obeying the Old Testament laws, traditions and customs, including the oral laws they had developed over the centuries to help guarantee they were actually obeying all that God gave Moses. However, Paul is saying in doing so, you guys have actually left what is like Christ for what is not; you guys are actually becoming less like Christ, all while claiming to be more like Him! The reason is that Old Testament Law is not the standard of righteousness, Jesus is, so in leaving the grace of Christ, they were leaving the reality and experience of actual righteousness for what it is not!

⁷ Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul's First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*](#) (Vol. Volume 11, p. 49). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

- F. Paul then wraps up his comments of their current testimony by reminding them that their heart may have changed towards him, but his heart hasn't changed towards them.
- G. **20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.**
1. K.S. Wuest wrote,
 2. **"Robertson says in connection with this passage, "Paul could put his heart into his voice. The pen stands between them. He knew the power of his voice on their hearts." But the apostle found it impossible to go to them at that time, and thus in the providence of God, the Church has the letter to the Galatians, and has found it a tower of strength and a bulwark against the heresy which teaches that salvation is appropriated by faith plus works."**⁸
 3. In other words, God was at work in this situation and used it to provide the most focused letter in the entire Bible on the difference between a relationship with God through Jesus, and all the religious stuff that tries to replicate or supplement it. Had Paul been able to do what he wanted to do, that is to actually talk face to face with the people he deeply loved, then you and I may not have this earth shattering letter, that more than any other book in the New Testament, eviscerates any rationality of bringing any sort of religious practice or thinking into the Christian faith!

Challenge: What's your motivation in loving your family, friends and peers at work? Are you laboring for them to know and experience the glory of God and as such loving them for their benefit; or are you living for them to glorify you, and as such "loving" them for your benefit?

At the end of the day that's the difference between these two testimonies. Paul gave everything he had for these believers to know the love of God. He certainly wanted to be loved by them as well, and thus he was heartbroken about them treating him like an enemy. However, his primary motive was not for the believers in Galatia to think more of him, but rather for them to love being loved by Jesus more than anything! The Judaizers clearly had the opposite motive.

Recently, my daughter Ada has got into watching a show that's all about moms of girls on a competitive dance team. The show could have been made about dads of kids in baseball or really any parent of a kid in a sport. What ends up happening is that the mom's and the coach are in this constant drama over control, and at the end of the day it's plain as day what their motive is -- themselves. The Coach wants the girls to win not so they get the

⁸ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 130–131). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

experience of winning, but rather so she does; and the only people more selfishly motivated than the coach are the moms! They want their daughters to win more than anybody, and it's in no way empathetic for their daughters, but rather to fill their own need of success!

Now, it's easy to sit here and point out the selfish motives of those moms and coaches in the show Ada watches, or even of the Judaizers that Paul has been blasting in the book of Galatians, but we vitally need to stop and consider our own hearts and ask ourselves why we are "loving" and "serving" the people in our life!

Why do you love people? Is it because you actually love people (a fruit of Christ being formed in you!) or is it because you want people to love you? One will lead people into the experience of His love, which is actual love; and the other will lead people into the experience of your love, which at best falls eternally short of what they can have in Christ!