

“The Love of a Broken Heart”

March 27, 2011

Text: Galatians 4:12-20

I know very little about Neil Gaiman, but he must be a cynic.

Listen to what he says about love=>

“Love takes hostages. It gets inside you. It eats you out and leaves you crying in the darkness. So simple a phrase like 'maybe we should be just friends' turns into a glass splinter working its way into your heart. It hurts. Not just in the imagination. Not just in the mind. It's a soul-hurt, a real gets-inside-you-and-rips-you-apart—pain. I hate love.”

Gaiman is right in one respect=> that someone who loves, makes himself vulnerable to pain;

But he's a coward, if he's telling us that the answer is to avoid it.

Loving is indeed risky business.

My unsaved dermatologist didn't remarry for 10 years after his divorce, simply because he was too afraid to love anyone else.

But God, who is love, repeatedly commands believers to love=>

- * We're to love Him with all our heart/soul/mind/being.
- * We're to love our neighbors as ourselves.
- * We're to love one another from the heart (1 Pet 1:22).
- * Husbands are to love their wives (Eph 5:25), and wives their husbands (Titus 2:4).
- * We're even to love our enemies (Mt 5:44).
- * I Cor 14:1 tells us to pursue love, and Eph 3:17 instructs us to be rooted/grounded in love.

In today's text, we find the love of a broken heart—Paul's.

We'll see that he loved the Galatian churches, and that they used to love him—but that they no longer did.

He had lost their love.

They were a fickle bunch who, when they weren't with the one they loved, simply loved the one they were with.

When Paul was with them, they believed in salvation by God's grace, through faith in X alone, apart from good works, because that's what he had taught them.

But when Paul left, and the Judaizers came along, saying there was no salvation apart from the works of the Mosaic Law, the Galatians then changed their minds and agreed with them, instead.

When the Judaizers accused Paul himself of being a false apostle, who had lied to them, they agreed with that too.

No loyalty; no real love.

As we'll see today, it wasn't that the Galatians weren't loving, but that their love never ran any deeper than their emotions.

They had acted very lovingly towards Paul while he was with them, but their love evaporated once he left.

Their love, like their faith, was untrustworthy and unreliable.

In today's text, Paul is going to tell the story of this unrequited love by talking about attitudes...

- * Paul's attitude toward himself,
- * The Galatians' changed attitude toward Paul,
- * The Judaizers' attitude toward the Galatians
- * Paul's attitude toward the Galatians.

*** Paul's Attitude Toward Himself**

[Galatians 4:12] (Paul)=> *"I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are."*

Paul's attitude toward himself is found in the words, "I also have become as you are."

It's a self-sacrificing attitude that means, "I've become whatever you needed me to be, in order to be of help to you."

It's the attitude Paul expressed also in I Cor 9=>

"To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews... / to those who are without law [Gentiles], as without law... that I might win those who are without Law... / I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (I Cor 9:20-21).

Paul was born a Jew, but he was ready to lay aside his Jewish privileges/prejudices whenever necessary, in order to facilitate his sharing the gospel with others. He just wanted to bring people to X, and he was always ready to sacrifice his own identity to do so.

That wasn't true of the Judaizers, who insisted that Galatian Gentiles become like them, by becoming circumcised.

And for a while it hadn't even been true of the Apostle Peter.

In Antioch, he had joined the Judaizers, holding himself aloof from Gentile Xns and eating separately from them to avoid their Gentile defilement.

But Paul had never treated the Gentiles like that.

As far as he was concerned, the racial distinction between Jewish/Gentile Xns was non-existent, invalid & should be ignored.

In Gal 3:28, he wrote=> *"There is neither Jew nor Greek."*

Paul is telling the Galatian Xns, I don't worry about being Jewish/Gentile, so you stop worrying about it—like me.

They were Gentiles, who had been persuaded to become Jews.

The Judaizers had said they should be circumcised and obey the Law, describing that as a spiritually superior state, & a necessity for true acceptance by God.

Paul has said, “That’s nonsense. Forget about all such distinctions, which mean nothing to God.

“Just believe in X, & God will graciously save you, regardless of whether you’re Jewish or Gentile.

In addition, Paul was telling the Galatians to become like him in their abandonment of good works & religious deeds as a means of salvation.

He was saying, “Originally, you trusted the grace of God alone to save you, as it is applied to your hearts thru faith.

“I still do, but you wandered away from that truth, when the Judaizers taught that you also need to obey the Law.

“Meet me back where you started (simple faith in X alone), escape the Law’s bondage, & enjoy your spiritual freedom.”

Notice how personal this part of Paul’s letter has become.

He refers to his readers as “*brethren*” and says=> “*I beg of you.*”

Up to this point, he has been like a brilliant lawyer, marshalling undeniable evidence and irrefutable intellectual arguments in a battle against the heresy of salvation by works, & advocating salvation by God’s grace alone.

But now he becomes very personal, pouring out his heart to the Galatians.

He comes to them as a faithful lover to the unfaithful churches he loves, but whose fickle love for him has cooled in his absence.

So Paul’s attitude toward himself was that his own identity was a non-issue, if he could just lead others to X, & regain the love/trust of the Galatians.

*** The Galatians’ Changed Attitude Toward Paul**

The Galatians were primarily feelers—not thinkers, so they weren’t very discerning.

They seem naively gullible, and ready to follow anyone who appears nice & says things they like to hear.

This is again a tendency in the church today, & can only be countered by our commitment to theological truth; pastors and laymen alike.

When Paul left Galatia & the Judaizers showed up, his influence over them ceased, & the false teachers took control of their minds.

It was amazing that they could get so excited about the gospel of grace alone, & just a short time later change their minds and become fully convinced that salvation requires man’s works a/w/a God’s grace.

That's why Paul said at the beginning of his letter=> "*I am **amazed** that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of X, for a different gospel*" (Gal 1:6).

Not only had the Judaizers been able to change the Galatians' attitudes about Paul's teaching, but also about Paul himself.

Up till now in his letter, Paul has argued primarily on the basis of intellectual facts & theological doctrine;

Intellectual integrity has demanded he do that, lest he be viewed as an emotional manipulator, just like the Judaizers.

But knowing the Galatians are more easily persuaded by personal appeal than intellectual arguments, Paul now takes a very personal approach.

[Verse 12b]=> "*You have done me no wrong;*"

The guilt of knowing we've hurt someone who loves us can radically change our own attitude toward him.

We suspect his feelings about us are no longer friendly.

So we become guarded/defensive around him.

To remove such tensions, Paul writes, "*You did me no wrong.*"

He wants them to know he bears no resentment, despite their disloyalty to him.

He wants to get their relationship back on the right track by reminding them of their original affection for him, receiving both himself, and the gospel he had preached, with open hearts/minds.

He hopes to prevent their guilty feelings from interfering with a restoration of their love for him.

[Verses 13-14]=> "*but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; / and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.*"

We aren't told specifically what Paul's illness was.

Apparently, it had somehow led to his preaching the gospel in Galatia, and founding churches in that province.

Maybe he had contracted this illness on his journey, and stopped at Galatia to recuperate from it;

Or possibly he became ill while he was there, and had to stay longer than he intended, creating an opportunity for him to establish churches in that region.

Luke mentions nothing about any of this in his historical narrative of these events, in Acts 13.

In our text, Paul says his physical illness was a "*trial*"—a test or a temptation—for the Galatians.

They might have been tempted to despise him, or to treat him with contemptuous indifference because of it.

It may have involved some unseemly/unsightly symptoms, sights/smells potentially repulsive to the Galatians, tempting them to avoid him. Either that, or his being/remaining ill might have cost him his credibility as a prophet/teacher.

They could have thought that if he were really God's spokesman, the Lord would surely have healed him.

Thus X said to the people listening to Him teach=> *"No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!'"* (Lk 4:23).

Gentiles a/w/a Jews viewed any kind of misfortune (including sickness) as evidence of God's displeasure with a person.

* When the ship Jonah was on ran into a treacherous storm, the sailors said (Jonah 1:7)=> *"Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us."*

They assumed somebody's god was mad at him.

* When X's disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth, they asked (Jn 9:2), *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"*

Surprisingly, the Galatians hadn't been put off by Paul's illness, but they had received him/his-message, as if he were an angel sent directly by God.

In fact, they received him as X's representative—as if he were Jesus X Himself.

Their hearts were wide open to the gospel.

Acts 13:48 describes the scene in Pisidian Antioch, after Paul had originally taught there only 2 Sabbaths=> *"When the Gentiles heard this [the gospel], they began rejoicing & glorifying the word of the Lord; & as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. /And the word of the Lord was being spread thru the whole region."*

These Galatian people had discovered the wonderful truth of salvation by God's grace, and were rejoicing in it.

But the Galatians' attitude had changed in Paul's absence since then.

The Judaizers had persuaded them to distrust a gospel in which you didn't have to do something religious to earn salvation.

That seemed just too good to be true to them.

Theirs was a legalistic/joyless/graceless form of bondage, that could only lead to grim feelings of defeat, frustration, and failure.

So Paul asks them what had happened to all their happiness.

[Verse 15]=> “Where then is that sense of **blessing** [blessedness and happiness produced by fortunate circumstances] *you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.*”

Isn't it amazing that people who call themselves believers can leave the liberty/joys of being forgiven, cleansed, adopted by God, and indwelt by the H.S., & go back to the hopelessness of works righteousness?

As we saw last time, that is the power of spiritual pride.

It's far easier for fallen man trust himself than it is to trust God., in something so important as the salvation of his soul.

Paul says the Galatians had once loved him/his-gospel so much, they would have plucked out their eyes for him.

That may be just a figure of speech; or it may suggest that, whatever his physical illness, it had affected his eyesight.

Whichever the case, the Galatians would no longer sacrifice anything for Paul, because their attitudes had changed and they no longer felt that way about him.

Not only had their love for him vanished, they had actually been persuaded that Paul was their enemy.

[Verse 16]=> “Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

Paul had always told them the truth of God's saving grace.

He hadn't changed, but they had.

The Judaizers had changed their thinking about the message which they had once embraced.

So now they viewed both that message and its messenger (Paul) with suspicion/distrust, if not outright hostility.

It's amazing how cold-hearted a person can become when he opens himself up to Satan's influence.

* It breaks the heart of a parent to tell his child the truth, and yet have that child come to view him as an enemy for doing so.

The parent may say, “Drugs will ultimately destroy your life” or “Sex outside of marriage is not God's plan for people and is therefore wrong.”

But the child finds his friends' words more convincing, so he views his parent as an enemy who's out of touch with modern reality.

* It breaks the heart of a faithful pastor, like Paul, to watch someone to whom he has taught the truth, walk away from it.

The world has nothing but deadly lies/deception to teach that person, but he has chosen to listen to those lies instead of God's truth.

And now he consider the pastor an enemy for telling the truth.

* How much more must it break the heart of God to see people He loves reject the truth, & condemn themselves to His eternal wrath?

In Hos 6:4, He says to Israel/Judah=> *“What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, And like the dew which goes away early.”*

I.e., your loyalty is ephemeral/unreliable.

It vanishes quickly/easily.

Satan had used the Judaizers to change the Galatians’ attitude, turning them against Paul and the truth.

* **The Judaizers’ Attitude Toward the Galatians**

[Verse 17]=> *“They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them.”*

Paul says the Judaizers “eagerly sought” the Galatians.

Literally, they zealously busied themselves, going to extraordinary lengths in their pretended interest in the Galatians’ wellbeing.

They repeatedly contacted them to give the impression that they were deeply concerned about them.

They flattered them, by fawning/fussing over them.

If they’d had telephones in those days, they would have called them every day, asking how their day was going, and how they were feeling.

But it was all an insincere effort to win the Galatians over to themselves and their own false gospel of works-righteousness salvation.

Theirs wasn’t a genuine interest, but only the manipulative hypocrisy required to achieve their own devious goals.

The Judaizers didn’t seek the Galatians “commendably.”

A good parent seeks his child’s welfare “commendably”—with a sincere interest in the child’s health/wellbeing.

He prays for the Lord’s protection/blessing on the child.

He’s deeply burdened when that child is struggling or floundering and being tempted, or when he/she is not living faithfully for the Lord, thus putting himself outside the boundaries of God’s blessing.

The motives of the Judaizers weren’t commendable at all.

Paul says, *“They wish to shut you out,”* meaning to exclude/isolate them from the freedom of the gospel of grace, and from Paul who proclaimed it.

They wanted to brainwash the Galatians with their own legalism, and with a false characterization of Paul that would cause them to distrust him and become alienated from him.

Having succeeded in that, they would leave the Galatians with no one to rely on, but the Judaizers themselves (the detractors of the true gospel & the true apostle).

Paul says, “*in order that you may seek them*”—in order to make the Galatians dependent on them.

Satan uses this same tactic all the time, to tear apart both families/churches.

Gangs/cults will pretend affection for a young person by making him feel accepted/important.

Then they will systematically turn that child against his own parents, as if they were enemies, shutting them out of the child’s life.

Parents, it is your responsibility to discipline your child, resisting the self-serving urge to become his/her buddy.

Prov 22:15=> “*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.*”

But if you don’t love and communicate your love (and even your delight-in) that child, you are setting yourself up for someone else to teach him that you’re his enemy (not his ally/benefactor).

If you give him the impression he’s just a burden or even an embarrassment to you, you’re asking for trouble.

Satan attacks churches in this same way as well.

An unhappy member will start making lots/lots of friends.

Not commendably/sincerely, but with the ultimate purpose of taking those “friends” with him when he leaves, doing as much damage as possible.

*** Paul’s Unchanging Attitude Toward the Galatians.**

Paul’s attitude was one of longing for them.

First, Paul longed for the Galatians’ love.

[Verse 18]=> “*But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.*”

In verse 17, Paul said, “*They [the Judaizers] eagerly seek you,*” and now he acknowledges that it’s good to be eagerly sought.

It something almost anyone would like because it’s a compliment.

He is saying that he doesn’t jealously object to the Galatians’ enjoyment at being sought after by others, per se.

He wouldn’t object to anyone seeking after them if they were doing so for commendable reasons/purposes.

Paul himself had once been sought after by the Galatians, and he loved it.

He wished those times of warm affection between himself & these churches he had established, would return.

He longed to sense their love for him again.

He longed to be with them so he could.
Unfortunately, for the Galatians it was a matter of “out of sight out of mind.”
So they had transferred their loyalty to the Judaizers, because their love for
Paul lasted only as long as he was “*present with*” them.

Second, Paul longed for the Galatians’ welfare.

[Verse 19]=> “*My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—*”

The Judaizers hypocrisy & the Galatians’ transference of their affection/loyalty, break Paul’s heart, because he knows it could all lead to their full-on apostasy.

So he addresses them with the parental love of a mother, explaining his own commendable desires for them.

He says he feels like a mother, giving birth to them—again.

He had endured these labor-pains once before, teaching and praying anxiously for them to really put their faith in Jesus.

He’d thought they had become born again Xns;

But now he has his doubts.

And now he’s going through all that again, praying/hoping that they will trust X alone for their salvation, and reject the false gospel advocated by the Judaizers.

They have become defectors from the true gospel, so Paul prays they will come back to it.

Paul longs for X to become fully formed in them=>

* For X’s thoughts/feelings to become theirs.

* For His aspirations to become theirs too.

* For them to become fully transformed into X’s image.

Paul’s motive was the desire for their spiritual enrichment and welfare, but the Judaizers’ motive was to control/enslave them, and ultimately to have the Galatians seek after them.

Like Paul, every true pastor should be preoccupied w/ his people’s spiritual progress, laboring in preaching/prayer for it.

Third, Paul longed for the Galatians’ presence.

[Verse 20]=> “*but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*”

Paul’s hands were filled, ministering where he was right then, as he wrote this epistle.

He couldn’t leave and go to Galatia, but he fervently wanted to.

He was like the father of the prodigal son, just waiting at the window, hoping for a hint that his son had returned to him.

If Paul were with the Galatians, he'd gain firsthand knowledge of what was going on there, how deep the alienation had become & how badly they were deceived.

* If he were there with them, he could wrap his arms around them, and assure them of his continuing love for them.

* If he were there, he might better regain their fickle hearts, and change his tone of voice from severity to gentleness, no longer having to rebuke them.

But he wasn't there with them, and he was perplexed about why they had yielded so quickly/easily to the Judaizers' false teaching.

He felt at a loss, frustrated because of the distance between himself & these churches he loved so dearly.

They responded better to direct personal interaction than to intellectual reasoning, but from this distance, he could only give them reason & an assurance of his love.

Many a parent, and every true Xn teacher has come—like Paul—to a point at which he is perplexed because he has said/done all he can, to change lives for X, but nothing seems to have worked.

And now, like Paul, he must pray, trust the Lord, and wait, like the father of the prodigal son, for his loved-one to return voluntarily.

Our consolation is the knowledge that at one time, God had to wait for us to come to Him too.

And under His sovereign grace, and the irresistible call of the H.S., we came home.

If the Spirit can accomplish that in us, He can do the same in the hearts of those we love.

On the other hand, maybe you're a defector yourself, who has walked away from believing in X for your salvation and God is waiting for you to come back home like the Prodigal son.

If so, I pray that you will.