



## Looking Inwards (15 mins)

### Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



## Looking Outwards (15 mins)

### Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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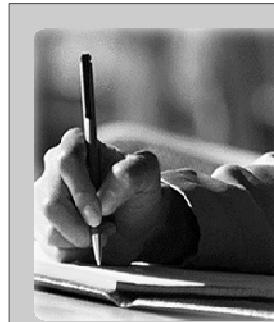
## HG106 Pauls Letter To The Galatians

### **Paul's Concern For the Galatians**

Galatians 4:12-20

Home Group Study Notes

10 May 2015 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

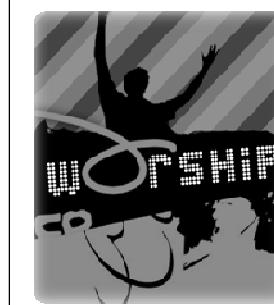
*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.*



## Welcome (10 mins)

### **Ice Breaker**

As we contemplate all that took place at the General Election on 7 May 2015, discuss why Christians should, or shouldn't, be involved with political parties (don't allow this discussion to last for too long!).



## Looking Upwards (10 mins)

### **Worship**

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



## Looking Upwards (40 mins)

### Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1:** Have you experienced moments in your Christian life, like the Galatians, vs15, when you have lost your 'first love' and the joy of your salvation? If you are able, share what may have caused this and/or how you were able to turn this around.

**2:** The Apostle Paul spoke a lot about loyalty. Do any of us owe loyalty to our church leaders? If so, how, why and why not?

**3:** Might you have an experience you could share where 'truth telling' by a church leader, such as the example of the Apostle Paul in vs16, has been life transforming for you? Might you feel able to share when it has been less than helpful?

Yes, it's fine to be keen and zealous, but make sure it's in the right direction, says Paul. If you're going to be zealous, be zealous towards Jesus. Can you see the apostle's heart here? I am in the pains of childbirth for you, he says. I'm perplexed for you, he says. I plead with you, he says in vs12. This isn't the cool detachment of a scientist at work. This is the passionate commitment of a pastor to his people. It's not that he wants their loyalty for his own sake. It's because he loves them so much, and can't bear the thought of them falling away from Jesus.

Now it's worth pondering if you are involved in any sort of Christian leadership, whether as a Home Group leader, a DCC member, a children's group leader, whatever it is. Do you show such love for the people you minister to? Ministering to people is more than a matter of simply teaching the truth, vital though that is. It's also a matter of the heart. It's about loving people. And if you come to your particular ministry with a cool detachment to 'get the job done?' then can I urge you to examine your heart. Because ministering the word of God to God's people can never be done in such a detached way. You never get that impression from the apostle Paul. No, he was a man passionately committed to those he served, and he had their best interests at heart.

**c) The True Pastor's Motive** Which brings me to my final point. The true pastor's motive - that Jesus be formed in people. And that is Paul's motive. That's why he does the job. Vs19-20: "*My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!*" Paul is mixing his metaphors a little, but the point is clear. He's like a mother in the pains of childbirth and he pleads with them, longing that they become more like Jesus. His greatest desire is that they become more and more like Jesus. But they will never do that unless they give up the false teaching they have been duped by, and come back to the true teaching of the gospel, and the true minister Paul. And that will always be the first and most important priority of a gospel minister. That they will long for Christ to be formed in your heart. That is why they will tell you the truth, sometimes at great cost to themselves, and sometimes at great pain to you. And their mindset will be one of passionate love for you, not wanting your idolisation, not wanting the kudos or glory of a great following. But simply because they want you to become like Jesus. Is that the minister you want?

**Conclusion:** As we finish, let me tell you about one man who put this ministry into practice. He was one of the most influential clergymen of the early part of the 19th century, and he was called Charles Simeon - one of my spiritual heroes - I had an article about him published in the international theological journal *Churchman* about him. Simeon was an extraordinary preacher of the Gospel. When he arrived as Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, in Cambridge, the normal congregation, who didn't want him, simply didn't turn up. The church wardens locked all the pews so those who did attend couldn't sit down. Eventually some started to come along and were converted. They had to stand in the aisles throughout the service and even then Simeon was only allowed to have one service in the morning. If he wanted any more they would have to be outside or elsewhere.

At his own expense he brought some chairs and set up benches for people to sit on. But the church wardens threw these out into the churchyard and set on fire. This went on for five years. When he began he couldn't find a single person who would even say 'good morning' to him. People would spit at him in the street, and throw dead cats at him as he preached in the open air. But he laboured away with passionate love and commitment to the truth for fifty years. His method was to tell the truth. His mindset was love for his people. His motive to see Christ formed in them. And he did those things despite the cost. At his funeral the whole town turned out to pay tribute to a great and godly man. Is this the sort of ministry you want? If so will you loyal to it? Because it is this faithful gospel ministry which will work for your joy in the Christian life. This is the sort of ministry which, under God, will lead to Christ being formed in you. And then you'll be able to stand firm in the joyful freedom of Jesus Christ all the days that he gives you.

Paul has already argued in chapters 1-2 that his gospel was not something he or anyone else made up. It was something he had been given directly by Jesus himself. I received it, he says in chapter 1, by revelation from Jesus. And that is why Paul is so passionately committed to defending his unique authority. It's not out of any personal pique or arrogance, it's because he knows their salvation is at stake. Ignore Paul, and you ignore Jesus. Move away from Paul and his gospel and you move away from Jesus and the life giving gospel of God.

And that is how this point is connected to the first. Because loyalty to Paul's gospel is the way to maintain your joy. So it was no surprise to see that the Galatians had lost their joy because they'd rejected Paul as their apostle and turned to false teaching. Similarly, for us, if we turn away from the true preaching and teaching of God's word, if we show loyalty to those who don't preach God's word, then don't be surprised if you find yourself leading a joyless and legalistic Christian life. You and I need the preaching of the word and authentic Biblical ministry, to keep us on the right track. Biblical ministry is vital to healthy, joyful Christianity. And so here Paul lovingly and passionately reveals his heart to them and pleads for them to come back.: "Are you going to be loyal to me and the Lord Jesus? Or to the false teachers and lies? Where is your loyalty?"

**3) The True Pastor's Heart:** I think we learn three lessons about the true and godly pastor in this passage - vital lessons we'd do well to heed ourselves lest we fall prey to false teaching.

**a) The True Pastor's Method** Paul always told the truth. But isn't that what authentic ministers do? They tell the truth and they tell it straight. Vs16: "*Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?*" The plain fact is that the Galatians do not like hearing the truth. They didn't mind it when he first came. But something's changed. And the change has occurred in the Galatians as they've listened to the false teaching. And when you fall for false teaching, you don't like it when you are told the truth. Because the truth is often painful to hear and hard to swallow. For the Galatians it would mean swallowing their pride and admitting they have been bewitched and hoodwinked. And if you baulk at the truth, if you shy away from admitting and applying the truth to your life, then you'll slide away from Jesus.

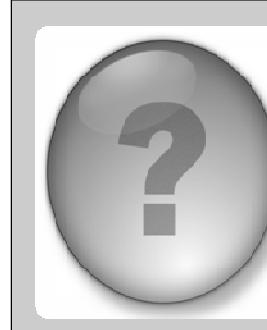
So what kind of minister do you want to hear? Someone who will flatter you and stroke your ego or someone who put the truth plainly? Now we don't always like it, but we need to ask where is our loyalty. To people who teach the truth, or to others who will give us what our itching ears want to hear? Now there are plenty of people in our land who will give you what you want to hear. How many who will give you what you need to hear? And where will your loyalty be? What kind of ministry are you looking for? Strong personality, fine jokes, powerful presence, great music, sharp suits? You might find all those things, but if this ingredient is missing, don't touch it with a barge-pole. Because it'll drain you spiritually, not build you up! And the joy of your grace empowered Christian life will be sucked out of you. Paul told the truth as it needed to be told. Will you be loyal to such truth telling people?

**b) The True Pastor's Mindset** And that is loving service. You could be passionately committed to the truth of the gospel but be a pastor who is like a sledgehammer cracking a nut. They are often the sort of people who are far more interested in a following than loving their people. But for Paul that was never an issue. See what he says in vs17-18: "*Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good and to be so always and not just when I am with you.*" See how Paul is passionately committed to his people. His mindset is one of love. So in vs17, all these false teachers are interested in is getting the Galatians following them. They want to alienate the Galatians from Paul. They want the Galatians to be zealous for them. They wanted a following rather than spiritual growth, as we'll see in a moment.

**4:** The Apostle Paul was passionate that the Galatians would remain steadfast in their faith in the Lord Jesus. Have you experienced a similar passion for a church members, past or present. Share this with your group, remembering the importance of confidentiality.

**5:** Rector Paul used the example of Charles Simeon as someone who has put some of the principles of this study into practise. Who would be one of your 'spiritual heroes' whom you look to for encouragement and an example of authentic gospel Christian ministry?

**6:** The Apostle Paul shared his heart for the Galatian church. What might be on your heart for the church family here at Emmanuel and why? Spend some time praying through some of the issues which have been raised.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## HG106: Paul's Letter To The Galatians ***Paul's Concern For the Galatians***

Galatians 4:12-20

### Home Group Sermon Notes

10 May 2015 - Revd Paul A. Carr

**Introduction:** The problem for Paul was the church he'd planted, prayed for, which he'd even suffered for, the church to which he'd been like a devoted mother and dedicated father has been influenced by false teachers who are beginning to lead them astray. But what grieved Paul so much was that this church had so quickly deserted the liberating message about Jesus and were turning to DIY religion. For the false teachers were teaching that whilst Jesus was good, he wasn't good enough. You have to follow other rules and rituals to make you a really top notch Christian. It was Jesus plus ... Paul is outraged because his spiritual children are in great danger and the false teachers are leading the Galatians away from Jesus. Remember Paul's words in vs11: "*I fear for you that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.*" And at the end of our passage in vs20 he says he's perplexed about them! This passage is a passionate call for them to come back to Jesus and to stand firm in the freedom he offers (Don't let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery he says in 5:1).

Thus far Paul has given some excellent theological reasons why the Galatians should reject the false teaching. But in this passage, Paul takes a slightly different tack. He appeals to them from his concern as their loving pastor. He reveals his heart and whenever Paul opens his heart, there is much to learn. Paul will ask the Galatians two questions which go to the very centre of the issues at stake in this letter - issues which are no different for you and I.

**1) Where Is Your Joy? vs 12-15:** The first question that Paul asks comes in vs15: "*What has happened to all your joy?*" Paul recognises there has been a change in these Galatians. Something has happened to make them different. There was a time when they were full of joy and they welcomed Paul as their friend with open arms. Vs13-14: "*As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.*"

Now there are all sorts of guesses as to what Paul's illness was. Some think Paul contracted malaria on the coast of Turkey, and had gone up to the hilly region of Galatia to recover. And, not one to miss an opportunity, he began to preach the gospel to the Galatians. Others think that he had some sort of eye complaint, which may explain why Paul says the Galatians were willing to give their very eyes to him. But that could easily be the first century equivalent of giving someone your last Rolo - if you remember the adverts. It's simply a figure of speech saying you'll do anything for a friend whatever the cost. Whatever it was, Paul was in a bad way. In fact, in vs14 he says that he was a trial to the Galatians. Paul seems to have been a labour intensive patient - yet they welcomed him, vs14, as if he were an angel or Jesus himself. That was how much they loved Paul and his message. But doesn't this show that the power of the message is not actually in the messenger, it's in the message itself? It's the message of the gospel that is so powerful.

So don't be discouraged if you think you are weak or unimpressive, if you think you're not especially gifted or intellectually able, or you cannot argue or speak persuasively. Remember it's not you or I who will ever persuade people to become Christians. It's in the gospel where the power lies. And, just as he did with Paul in Galatia, God can use you and me too!

But all the joy and love the Galatians showered upon Paul when he first arrived, has now gone. According to vs16 they now consider Paul their enemy and that's because they have moved away from Jesus. They have accepted the lies of the false teachers 'hook line and sinker'. They are not depending on God's grace to live the Christian life, but their own merit. Is it any wonder they lost their joy and first love. Because if you start trusting in your performance in spiritual matters to make you right before God, or to keep in God's good books, then you are bound to start feeling guilty and second rate. Because you will never be able to keep it up. You will always fall short of God's perfect standards. And slowly but surely your Christian life will take a nose dive.

We fall for the same thing the Galatians did. Now of course, we don't deny we are saved by God's grace. We know that we are not good enough for God, that Jesus died in our place on the cross. But that is where our trust stops. We continue the Christian life believing that we must keep rules and regulations to stay in God's good books. And it leads to joyless Christianity. The sort of Christianity that is totally unattractive to the outsider looking in.

All some people seem to see is people living out a rule based life largely through guilt or fear. When in fact the Christian life is all of grace from start to finish. Now that doesn't mean that there is nothing we must do. We'll see in a few weeks time that being a Christian does not mean we are to sit back and wait for heaven. But the point is that being a Christian is about trusting the grace of God every day, not just at the start of our Christian life. Living joyfully in the knowledge and freedom that we are God's children by grace and not because of what we do.

And that is Paul's exact antidote to joyless Christianity. So have a look at vs12: "*I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong.*" Paul is encouraging the Galatians to come back to his way of thinking and trust in the freedom of the gospel. He's asking them to abandon their joyless slavery to rules imposed by false teachers. Come back to Christ and know again the wonderful truth of being a child of God, not because you've earned it but because God has given you that gift. And by his Spirit, God is asking that same question to you and me today. Have you lost your joy? Have you forgotten that being a Christian is about being freed from legalism? Maybe you have lost your first love? Maybe if you are honest, you are not quite as excited about the fact that Jesus Christ died on a cross for you.

Now it's very important to see that Paul is not necessarily asking us to be happy, to have a smile on our faces all the time. Because joy and happiness are not the same thing in the Bible. For example James urges us in his letter to consider it pure joy whenever we face trials of many kinds. He's not expecting us to say "hooray, I'm suffering" in an outward way. No, joy is that quiet trust and unshakeable confidence that God has your life in his hands and will never ever let you go. And so you delight in him and live trusting his grace day by day. That's why Paul can command us to rejoice in the Lord always in Philippians 4. You cannot command someone to be happy. But you can command someone to have Christian joy, because joy is far deeper than happiness. And it's something that can sustain us in the most difficult of times. Jane's funeral on Tuesday.

**2) Where is your loyalty? vs 16-20:** Paul asks the Galatians a second question in vs16-20. Where is your loyalty? Because the sad fact was that in rejecting the apostle Paul, the Galatians were rejecting the gospel itself. In embracing the false gospel of the false teachers, they had embraced lies and rejected their true apostle. The problem is that rejecting Paul means rejecting Jesus.