

Back to Blessed Place Galatians 4: 8-15

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[0 : 00] Galatians chapter 4, Galatians chapter 4. Over the last few weeks, we have talked about being a part of God's family.

We have talked about being children of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is a great blessing. We talked about the blessing that is to be considered part of God's family, to be a child of God and the blessings that come with it.

But sometimes people start to drift backwards. They start to go back to what life used to be. And here today, Paul is going to say, look, you need to get back to the blessed place.

You're starting to drift away. You're starting to fall backwards. You're starting to backslide. You need to get back to the place where you act and live like a child of God.

You know, before the salvation, the Galatians were a religious people. They worshipped Diana.

[1 : 19] They worshipped Jupiter. They worshipped other of the Greek and Roman gods and things. They were religious people, but they were also lost people.

They were not saved people. They were not on their way to heaven because they were worshipping all these other gods and not the God, the one true God. They basically lived in a paganistic society.

And I don't know if you remember this or not remember. What's the word I want? Have noticed this, but we kind of live in a pagan society today too. God is not all that important to us.

So many other things have replaced God as God. money, power, prestige, all of those different things are replacing God.

If I could have this, if I could have that, then life would be all right. As a child of God, we have more than we could ever possibly want. Remember last week we were talking about the fact that we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

[2 : 27] We are heirs because we are a child of God. A lot of denominations today are going that same route of other things that are becoming more important.

Denominations, religions, they position God kind of back of the pack. This is important, this is important, this is important.

God, well, he's down here. Let me read something to you. We just had inaugural ball, inaugural balls, inaugural concerts, and things like that this last week.

In 2009, the inaugural concert was given. It was given by Bruce Springsteen, Beyonce, and the Washington Gay Men's Chorus.

They were the ones who sponsored it. And so they asked people to come in and speak as part of the concert, you know, give testimonies and things like that. One of the ones they asked was a guy by the name of Gene Robinson, Bishop Gene Robinson.

[3 : 29] I don't know how many of you know him, know who he is. I've heard his name before, but he used to be the bishop in New Hampshire. And he was an openly gay bishop of the Episcopal Church there.

And here's how the New York Times reported what was said at that concert by him. They said, Bishop Robinson said he has been reading inaugural prayers through history and was horrified, his word, horrified, at how specifically and aggressively Christian they were.

I am very clear, he said, that this will not be a Christian prayer. I won't be quoting scripture or anything like that. The texts that I hold as sacred are not sacred texts for all Americans.

And I want all people to feel that this is their prayer. He went on to say that the God of our many understandings, language, he said he learned from the 12-step program he attended for his alcohol addiction.

That's where his prayer was coming from. Not about God, not from God, not from God's word, none of that. And a lot of what we call Christian today, people are giving in a way that really has nothing to do with God's word or the Bible.

[4 : 58] We need to be so careful. And the Galatians were getting to that point where they had loved God, they had followed God, they had enjoyed what Paul had taught them, but now they're starting to drift backwards.

Read with me Galatians chapter 4, beginning at verse 8. Galatians 4, 8. How be it then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

But now, after ye had known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage.

Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as ye are.

Ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preach the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye despise not, nor reject it.

[6 : 11] But receive me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and had given them unto me.

Paul is telling them, said, you saw me in my infirmity. And it said that Paul had an eye disease and things that hindered him in his ministry. He says, you were ready to pluck out your eyes and give them to me because of the love you had for me and for Christ.

So that's what that section is talking about when you read that. They had fallen back into trying to do things their own way, by their own work.

You remember in pagan Rome, there's a building still there today, the Pantheon. Put that word apart. Pan, all.

Theon, God. All the gods. And remember Rome had a bunch of them. All the gods were worshipped at this one building.

[7 : 22] Polytheism was a great, big thing that they did back then. And the fact that they could worship all kinds of gods for different things.

We are getting to be like that again today. We have gods about everything. Again, money, fame, all these things. We look for things.

And if you go to some of the Eastern religions, we have gods for all kinds of things, just like they used to. For the rain, for the growing, for the whatever. There's all kinds of them.

Paul wrote to Timothy about the same time. And he wrote Timothy and he said, Timothy, beware. Timothy 3.5. 2 Timothy 3.5.

It says, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof from such turn away. He says there's people out there who have a form of godliness.

- [8 : 21] They appear to be spiritual. But he says they deny the power. They look like they're living right. They look like they're doing the right thing. But they're not following the God of creation, the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the God who can save you from your sin.
- Be careful. A.W. Tozer, who was a pastor back in the early to mid-60s, early to mid-1900s, he died in 1963.
- He said this, religion today is transforming the people. It's not transforming the people. Let me read that again. Religion today is not transforming the people.
- It is being transformed by the people. It is not raising the moral level of society. It is descending to society's own level and congratulating itself that has scored a victory because society is smiling, accepting its surrender.
- It is not changing the people. We bring God down to our level. Instead of us coming up to his, instead of us worshipping him as he is, we've tried to bring God down to us.
- [9 : 36] We've tried to make him more like us. I don't know about you, but my God is greater. My God is almighty. My God is eternal. My God is supreme.
- My God is above all. I don't want to bring him down. If he comes down to our level, is he really God? No. Galatians have been saved from paganism.
- But now they're going backwards in the fact that they're accepting another thing. They've gone back to, well, maybe instead of just following Jesus, we need to do the religious rituals of Judaism.
- And Paul's going, no, you left paganism, now you're going to legalism. Both things are dependent upon works. He says, our works don't cut it. Jesus Christ does.
- Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. Jesus Christ is the only way to get before the Father. John 14, 6. I am the way, the truth, and life.
- [10 : 34] No man cometh unto the Father but by me. So let's have a word of prayer. And let's talk about this passage and what Paul's trying to teach them here. Dear Heavenly Father, again, we thank you that we have this word of God in front of us.
- We have it that we can read it. We can take it and we can apply it to our lives. And we can take it in and we can understand the things you want us to understand. Lord, you have given it to us to be our guide.
- You've given it to us to be our hope. Lord, help us to take this word. Love it. Make it a part of our lives every day.
- Every part of every day. Lord, may we live our lives according to it. Lord, help us to know you. Help us to love you. And Lord, I pray right now that you would help me as I give this word.
- Make it plain. Make it clear. Make it so anybody could understand what you have for us. Lord, minister to our hearts now in Jesus' name. Amen. The first thing Paul wants to show them is the fact that they are relapsing.
- [11 : 42] The relapse of the Galatians. And the first thing he does is record what they were like before they were converted. Look at verse 8 again. He says, For he that wrought effectually...
- Is that the right one? No, I'm in chapter 2. Go back to chapter 4. Chapter 4, verse 8. How be it then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no God.
- He says before they were saved, before their conversion, they were religious people. We kind of already said. They were religious. They loved things that they could worship and things that they could do.

They worshipped... Some of them worshipped the true God. That's this group here that he's talking to. They had been worshipping the true God. Some worshipped Mohammed. Some worshipped Buddha.

Some worshipped Hinduism, which has a whole lot of different gods in there. Some people worshipped themselves. It's called humanism. We can fix everything ourselves.

[12 : 45] We can take care of everything ourselves. Man can fix it. Man can take care of it. Haven't been doing too good of a job so far. See, what that thing is, though, is they get caught up in the works that they do.

God's going to love me because I do this. God's going to love me because I do that. God's going to love me because I do this other thing. God does not love us because of what we do.

God just loves us. And that's so hard for us to understand sometimes. God just loves us. Verse you hear often from me.

Romans 5.8. But God commended his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God loved us so much that Jesus Christ came and died on the cross.

Gave of himself for us even though we were sinners. He says, look, before your salvation, you worshipped other gods. Before your salvation, you worshipped things.

[13 : 48] So not only were they religious, they were idolaters. They were idolaters. During this time, the Greek gods, the Roman gods, other gods, they influenced people.

And Paul had written about that as well to the Romans. Romans 1. Verse 21 through 23. He says this. Verse 22.

He said they used to worship these idols. And instead of worshipping God in heaven, magnificent, awesome, and all that he does and is, they tried to reduce him to these little idols.

And they worshipped those. He said God is not one of those things. He is not like that. Our God is magnificent. He is beyond description.

That's what they used to do. Then along comes Paul. And Paul preaches to them the gospel. Look at verse 9. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.

[15 : 23] Stop there. Now you know God. Better yet, God knows you. You're known of God. He says, look, but now.

You're not the same as you used to be. There's a change that has taken place. God knows them. God is known by them. What does it mean when he says God knows you?

2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 19. It says this. Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure. Having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.

And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. The Lord knoweth them that are his. He says, look, you're known of God.

Are you known of God? Are you known by God? Does God know who you are? He says, the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal.

[16 : 24] How do we know that God knows us? Remember we talked about it the last couple weeks? The seal of the spirit. That imprint that's made on us.

We belong to God. We are part of his family. We have all the rights and privileges of family. He says, you're known of him. But so often, we go our own way.

Do our own thing. We get to be teenagers. And we're going to do our own thing now. We've got our own way of doing it. Charles Spurgeon said this.

Remember that if you are a child of God, you will never be happy in sin. Oh, think about that. If I'm a child of God, Jesus Christ is living within me.

I am never going to be happy in sin. You are spoiled for the world, the flesh, and the devil. Those things are not going to make you happy. Those things are not going to please you. Those things are going to cause you distress. He says, when you were regenerated, there was put into you a vital principle, which can never be content to dwell in the dead world.

[17 : 39] You will have to come back if indeed you belong to the family. He said, you might go out and you might try this and that and the other thing. But he said, if you're truly saved, if you're truly a child of God, you will not be happy out there.

You will not be pleased with what's going on. You will not be satisfied with what's going on. You will come back to the family. It made me think of the prodigal son. Prodigal son went out and did his thing.

Well, what did he wind up doing? Coming home. Coming back to the father. See, the Galatians had had a sincere belief.

But it was a wrong belief in these pagan religions. They did not have Christ. But now, they claim to have Christ. They claim that they have accepted Christ as the savior. And Paul's saying, if you truly did, you're not going to be happy out here in this sin.

1 Peter, 2 Peter, 2 Peter 3, 2 Peter 1, 3 and 4 says this. According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through us.

[19 : 06] He says, look, you've been given, when you came to Christ, things that pertain to life and godliness. You've been given precious promises. You've been given a divine nature.

You are never going to be happy in sin again. But, they started to relapse. Look at verse 9, the end of it.

He says, how turn ye again to the weak and barely elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage. Ye observe days and months and times and years.

He says, look, you've had a relapse. You're trying to go backwards. You're trying to backslide. You're trying to go back away from Christ. How turn ye? You have been called a child of God.

You have been placed in the family of God. You are an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. How could you possibly want to go back to living according to works when God has given you so much?

[20 : 13] How could you possibly want to go back from the freedom? How could you want to go back to these weak and beggarly things that are out there? Someone has said it's an anonymous quote.

You've heard different variations of this, I'm sure. But, if you are not as close to God as you used to be, who, you do not have to guess who moved.

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So, you come to God, confessing your sin, asking him to forgive you of your sin, saving you for all eternity.

If you start feeling less close to God, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Who moved? It wasn't God. It was us going back.

And he says, Galatians, look, you need to stop and look at what you are doing. You're part of the family. Why would you go back?

[21 : 14] And he uses that word, weak. He says, you're weak. You're setting yourself up for bondage again. You just replaced paganism with legalism. It's still all about works. And he uses that word, beggarly.

He says, look, what you're doing is, you're going back to things, things that are lacking, things that are not respectful of what the Spirit has done in your life.

You need to be so very careful of where you're going and what you're doing. They turn back to bondage. He says, they're also turning back to rituals, verse 10.

He says, he observed days and months and times and years. What is he talking about when he says that? In the Jewish traditions, the Jewish rituals, days, weekly Sabbath.

Months. They had festivals at the beginning of every month for the new moon. Kept by the Jews. They had extra sacrifices to things they did there at the beginning of the month.

[22 : 17] Numbers, chapter 10, verse 10. Also in the day of your gladness and in your solemn days and in the beginnings of your months, new moon, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifice of your peace offerings and they shall do, may be to you a memorial before your God.

I am the Lord of you. He gave that to the Jews to do. To remind them. But he says, now you have Christ who's living in you daily. Who's with you all the time. You don't know, you don't have to go back to these things.

And then he says times. You know, remember the feast of Passover and feast of Pentecost and feast of the tabernacles and all that. You don't have to go back to those things.

Christ is with you every day. Living within you. The years, the sabbatical year, the year of Jubilee, those type of things. No, you don't need all of those things anymore. You have Jesus.

You've been set free from having to do all the works. You have Christ. Colossians chapter 2, verse 13 and 14 says, And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

[23 : 49] He says, Jesus took your sins. Jesus nailed them to his cross. He has quickened you, made you alive.

He has forgiven you of your sins. He has done everything. You do not need all this other stuff. It's made Paul stop to think about his work with them.

The regret of the apostle. The regret of the apostle. And first of all, Paul's fear for their faith. Look at verse 11. I am afraid of you.

A better word there would be for. I'm afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. He says, I'm afraid because I think I've been working and telling you and teaching you and giving you all these things, but I'm thinking I might have done it in vain.

You're not understanding. You're not grasping. You're not getting. It doesn't mean they've lost their salvation. They were truly saved.

[24 : 56] But it means they've lost the principles that go with that salvation. They lost the idea that they can live by faith and not by works.

He says, you've missed that idea. You've lost that idea. You're going backwards. Second Corinthians 11, 2 and 3. It says, For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.

For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

He says, You are missing the point. You're trying to go back to doing works when the simplicity that is in Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. That's what it says in Romans. That's it. That's all there is to it. Believe on Jesus Christ.

[26 : 02] And yet we want to add so many things. He's also fearful for their failure. He's fearful for their failure. He's put this labor into them.

He's spent time with them. He's taught them. He's helped them start a church. He's helped them do all these different things. And now they're going back to religious rituals. He's fearful that he bestowed upon them labor in vain.

And he's so worried that they fall for false teaching. They listen to others and miss the point of the gospel.

Which brings us to the third thing. He's about to give them a reminder. A reminder of the apostle. Look at verse 12 with me again. Verse 12 says, Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as you are.

Ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation was in my flesh.

[27 : 14] Ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, as a messenger, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?

For I bear you record that if I had, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me. He reminds them of what it was like when he first came.

He reminds them of what it was like when they first heard the message of the gospel. The blessedness of salvation. And what does he say?

Look, you want to get back to where you should be? First of all, follow my example. Notice what he said there in verse 12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as you are.

I'm just like you. I face the same temptations, I face the same fears, I face everything in this world just like you do, but follow my example.

[28 : 19] Wow. Think about that one for a minute. Somebody's going astray, somebody's going in the wrong direction. Do you want to go up to them and say, let me help you, follow my example?

I can see somebody going, nope. You know, Paul had a transparency about him. He said, look, follow my example.

And the first thing he said was, follow my example in living. How we live our lives. That's what he's talking about in verse 12. He says, be as I am.

You know who else said that? Jesus. Matthew chapter 4, verse 19. He says, he says, he says, he says, he says, he says, he says, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

He's talking to fishermen. They've been out fishing. They've been out all night, remember, and they didn't catch anything. He sends them out and says, you know what?

[29 : 28] Try again. He says, look, follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men. What was Jesus all about?

Bringing salvation to those around him. He wants them to be that way. Paul writes to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 1. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Don't follow me in everything I do, but follow me as I follow Christ. As you see me doing what Christ wants me to do, as you see me going according to God's word, you follow that. Can we live our lives like that?

Following Christ. He says, follow me in living. Also follow me in my preaching. 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 3, 4, and 5. I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

Isn't that what he said here? He says, you know, I had issues. I had problems. I had infirmities. I had things going on. Verse 4 of chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians.

[30 : 34] And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He says, I didn't get up there and give you my words.

I didn't get up there and do things so that you would see me. He says, I was actually scared to get up in front of you, but you got to see a demonstration of the Spirit's power in me as he worked through me.

And he said she's scared about going on a mission trip. She doesn't like getting up and talking. But, as she goes, you'll see a demonstration of the Spirit's power in her life, hopefully.

Verse 5, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. He said, it's not what you do. It's not your works. It's the power of God in you.

Do you understand that? Do we understand that? I think so many times, Christians, they're still trying to do things through work. He says, no, it's the power of God.

[31 : 40] Then he says, remember the love. Remember their love that they had for me. Remember what it was like when I first brought you the message of the gospel.

That sound familiar? Sound like another passage of Scripture you know? Revelation chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. The message to the seven churches. In the church at Ephesus, Jesus said this.

He says, nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick from his place, except thou repent.

He says, you've gone back from the first works. He says, go back to the first works. Oh, anyway, I thought works were bad. I thought you're supposed to trust Christ. You know what their first work was?

Trusting Jesus as their Savior. That was the first work. He says, go back to the first one. Go back to trusting Jesus. Go back to allowing him to do his work in your life.

[32 : 59] He comes here to Galatia. He preaches the gospel. The people receive the message of the gospel, even in spite of the infirmities and things that Paul had. They showed compassion to him.

They heard what he had to say. They believed what he had to say. See, God's calling out those who have backslidden.

He says, look, you're a part of the family. Why would you ever leave? If you have God as your father, remember the last two Sundays?

Abba, father. Daddy, father. God is your father, yes. Legally and all those other things.

But he's also your dad. He's there to take care of you, to meet your need, to comfort you, to just hold you if necessary. He is there. He says, why would you backslide from God as your father?

[33 : 59] Remember, we mentioned Sunday school this morning. Remember Thomas? Oh, yeah, Thomas. He doubted, didn't he?

Jesus took time with him, showed him his hands and his feet. What was Thomas' response to Jesus doing that? My Lord and my God.

My Lord and my God. Do we see God the Father? Do we see Jesus Christ?

My Lord and my God. That he would come back to help someone who is in doubt. How about if we desert God?

Jonah. He still loves us. What if we deny God? Peter. He still loves us. What if we doubt God?

[35 : 02] He still loves us. God loves us with the love of a father, the love of a dad. You are part of the family of God.

You're children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Come back to the family. Don't go astray. Don't go following after these other things. Come back.

I don't know if anybody here this morning is struggling. But God says, come back. Be a part of the family. I don't know if somebody here this morning doesn't know Jesus Christ as your Savior.

But if you do not know him, ask him to come into your life. Ask him to be your father. Ask him to save you for all eternity. He says, look, come back to me.

God created us. God gave us life. God gave us a way of salvation from sin. God gave us, will give us a home in heaven.

[36 : 10] God will do so many things if we but trust him. Put our trust in him and allow him to do his work in our life. A lot of people in this world today are following pagan things.

A lot of people in this world today are following things that rely on works. What they need to do is see Jesus. They need to see Jesus in the life of each one of us.

So as we come in contact with people every day, help them to see Jesus in the life. Page 513.

513 in your hymn book. 1. Aclal immunity. David? 2. Jacob, 1933. 513 in his book. 613 in his book.

815 in his book. 815 in his book. 516 in his book. 516 in his book. 715 in his book. 715 in his book. 817 in his book. 818 in my book.

[37 : 14] 819 in his book. 916 in his book. 820 in his book. 916 in his book.