

Galatians 4:8-20

⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹But now that you know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹I fear for you, that my efforts for you may have been in vain. ¹²I beg you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong.

¹³You know that it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. ¹⁴And although my illness was a trial to you, you did not despise or reject me. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself. ¹⁵What then has become of your blessing? For I can testify that, if it were possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

¹⁷Those people are zealous for you, but not in a good way. Instead, they want to isolate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. ¹⁸Nevertheless, it is good to be zealous if it serves a noble purpose—at any time, and not only when I am with you.

¹⁹My children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.

Berean Standard Bible, UK

1

I've got it, now I use it. Galatians 4:8-20

I have spiritual freedom. 4:8-11

I have been given freedom. 8 "you were slaves to... non-gods"

I need to live my freedom. 9 "Do you wish to be enslaved all over again"

I have Christian friends. 4:12-15

I don't limit myself. 13 "because of an illness that I first preached"

I don't limit others. 12 "you welcomed me as if I were... Christ"

I have a Heavenly Father. 4:16-20

I have been given my new direction. 18 "be zealous if it serves a noble purpose"

I have been given my transformation. 19 "Christ is formed in you"

2

When you are un-lost you are on the right road. Galatians 4:8-20

Regrets are at the end of that road. 4:8-11

Non-Christians are slaves. 8 “you were slaves to... non-gods”

Christians can back-slide. 9 “turning back to those weak and worthless”

Relationships are the start of this road. 4:12-15

We bare the family resemblance. 12 “become like me, for I became like you”

We share the family acceptance. 12 “you welcomed me as if I were... Christ”

Reasons keep us on this road. 4:16-20

I am undertaking a noble task. 18 “be zealous if it serves a noble purpose”

I am undergoing a transformation. 19 “Christ is formed in you”

3

Be the winner you were saved to be. Galatians 4:8-20

Salvation means I start strong. 4:8-12

Step away from the world. 8-9 “when you did not know God, you were slaves”

Stay away from the world. 9-11 “how is it that you are turning back”

Sanctification means I stay strong. 4:13-15

Christians get problems. 12-13 “it was because of an illness that I...”

Christians seek solutions. 14-15 “if it were possible, you would have...”

Success means I finish strong. 4:16-20

Enthusiasm is good. 16-18 “it is good to be zealous if it serves a noble purpose”

Christlikeness is best. 19-20 “until Christ is formed in you”

4

What Christians look like. Galatians 4:8-20

Saved by Christ. 4:8-11

Before you knew Christ. 8 “you did not know God, you were slaves”

Now you know Christ. 9a “But now that you know God”

You can’t add to Christ. 9b “turning back to those weak and worthless principles”

Followers of Christ. 4:12-20

Christians are role-models. 12 “become like me, for I became like you”

Christians are harmless. 12b “You have done me no wrong”

Christians are limitless. 13 “it was because of an illness that I...”

Christians are sacrificial. 15 “torn out your eyes and given them to me”

Christians are honest. 16 “become your enemy by telling you the truth”

Christians are enthusiastic. 18 “zealous if it serves a noble purpose”
Christians are maturing. 19 “until Christ is formed in you”

5

Under construction. Galatians 4:8-20

Remember what I once was. 4:8-11
Realise what I am now. 4:12-15
Rejoice in what I am becoming. 4:16-20

6

Hold on. We’re on a rough ride. Galatians 4:8-20

Hold on to your faith. 4:8-12
 Remember who you were. 8-9 “you were slaves”
 Remember what you did. 9-10 “observing special days”
 Remember who you are with. 11-12 “I beg you, brothers”

Hold on to your friends. 4:13-16
 Friends come from unexpected places. 13 “because of an illness”
 Friends can do unexpected actions. 14-15 “torn out your eyes and given them”
 Friends can say unexpected things. 16 “telling you the truth”

Hold on to your freedom. 4:17-20
 My zeal is Christ-likeness. 17 “zealous... in a good way”
 My goal is Christ-likeness. 18 “a noble purpose”
 My fulfilment is Christ-likeness. 19-20 “Christ is formed in you”

A

Back to the future. Galatians 4:8-16

Australian freeways - take a wrong turn and try to enter a freeway exit, you are confronted by a huge red sign, "Go back. You are going the wrong way."

Go back to blazing a new trail 4:8-10
 Someone (Martin Luther?) If Jesus wore a crown of thorns, his followers should not expect a bed of roses. Christian life can be difficult. Problems like sickness; or like relationship difficulties at home, work, church or studies; financial difficulties; losing your job; well the list is endless. Being a Christian does not shield you from

difficulties. Instead, our faith opens up new resources for us to use. It is easy to return to your comfort zone of the old ways. Don't fall into that trap.

I once told my manager that his actions were illegal, immoral, and contrary to company policy. My manager already knew all that, so the solution was to sack me. Everything about that experience was bad. The only thing over which I had any control was my own reactions to it.

Don't let anyone control you: Not your boss; not your kids; not even your spouse. Make no mistake, you do need to work with them, but do it as a partnership; do it as a team; you can even do it as a hierarchy. Then you are on your way to success. The only rule is don't allow anyone to take the place of Jesus in your life.

"You were formerly enslaved to those forces that are not of God" (8b) You came to the cross and set a new direction for your life. Like a compass calling you back to a certain direction...

Go back to the place of discovery 4:11-14

Why do bad things happen to good people? Bad things happen to everyone; even good people; even the apostle Paul. He was on a missionary journey to tell people the Gospel, but he fell into a terrible illness. His companions were so concerned that he might go blind that they seem to have abandoned their missionary journey and deviated to Galatia. Paul's illness was not any form of punishment against him. It was the very opposite. He became ill so that he would be taken to a place that he might otherwise never have gone. His illness was an opportunity; an opportunity for the Galatians to be challenged with the Gospel.

When you discover something for the very first time, it can fill you with delight. But over time that sense of wonder begins to fade.

4I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

5Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. (Revelation 2:4-5a)

Go back to the place of former joy 4:15-16

Here is the question: "What has happened to all your joy?" (15a)

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, that is also where your heart will be." (Matthew 6:21) This principle works in 2 ways. It works in a negative manner. Men if you think about a woman who is not your wife, you are taking your heart into a place that is exciting for the old flesh nature, but dangerous for love, security, peace, and joy. But the principle also works in a positive manner. So, how do you recover your joy?

B

Growing pains. Galatians 4:8-31

Past hindrances to growth. 4:8-11

People helping me to grow. 4:12-15

The path of my growth. 4:16-20
The principle of growth. 4:21-31

Other possible titles

Leave your past behind
Rediscover your joy
Avoid back-sliding
This is how you make progress
The gold at the end of the rainbow
Friends can have the difficult conversation
In the potter's hands
Add more joy to your life
But now, v9
Perseverance
Endurance to the end
Keep your eye on the prize
Don't lose your way. Go His way.
Be zealous for a noble purpose
Learn to use your compass
Divine non-healing
From backsliding to bounce back

Quotes and illustration

In Holly Springs, Mississippi, there's a man who claims to be the world's greatest Elvis fan. Paul McCloud attended 120 Elvis concerts, and has collected hundreds of scrapbooks that contain over a million references to Elvis. He owns 55,000 records and CDs of Elvis. He named his only son Elvis. He has renamed his home 'Graceland Too', and has opened it to the public (for a price) as a shrine to Elvis. It's the #1 tourist attraction for Japanese tourists in Holly Springs. Paul McCloud is obsessed with Elvis and knows every detail about his life. But if you ask him if he ever met Elvis, he'll say that the greatest regret of his life is that he never met Elvis. Paul McCloud is an Elvis expert, but He doesn't know Elvis. He reminds me of some people who are Jesus-experts, but they don't know Jesus. They may own a lot of Bibles, books and pictures about Jesus; and they may have the walls of their home decorated with crosses. But that's not the same as knowing Jesus. (David Dykes)
[The attraction closed when Mr McCloud died in 2014]

Service suggestions

Theme / Aim

Call wayward Christians back to a renewed commitment to Jesus

Alternate title

You can be the Homecoming King or Queen

Anthem

Theme from TV series "Welcome back, Cotter"

Song "Welcome back to Jesus"

Introduction

"But now" v9a

Children's message

How a compass works

Prayer meditation

"I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" v19

Communion

"you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now" v8-9

Offering

"if it were possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me" v15

Benediction

"it is good to be zealous if it serves a noble purpose"

Music and songs

Songs about freedom, "you were slaves" v8

Songs about backsliding, "turning back to those weak and worthless principles" v9

God-pleaser (Hartman)

Welcome back to Jesus (Evie Again)

Songs about Christ-likeness, "Christ is formed in you" v19

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion

1. What was the roughest land, sea, or air, journey you have been on?
 2. What do you think may have been the three roughest times for Jesus?
 3. The Galatians were leaving the rough road to Christlikeness, and returning to the smooth path of religion (Galatians 4:9). Suggest why they might make that choice.
 4. Let's try to see things from God's point of view. Suggest some reasons why God does not make everyone healthy and wealthy.
 5. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. Aren't we supposed to get anything we ask God for? Why was this answered with a 'No'?
 6. Read Galatians 4:19. What is the goal of my life? Why is that such a good goal to have?
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