

"Am I Become Your Enemy ..."

"So then, am I become your enemy by telling you the truth" (Gal. 4:16)? In this paragraph Paul makes a personal appeal to Galatians (Gal. 4:12-31). He begs them to become as he, for he had become as they (Gal. 4:12). He reminds them of the attitude they once had toward him. He had initially preached the gospel to them because of an infirmity in his flesh (4:13). There were some physical blemishes with Paul which might have caused them to despise and reject him, but they did not. They received him warmly as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus (Gal. 4:13f). Thus he asks, "*Where is that gratulation (your feelings of joy and happiness they had toward Paul) of yourselves? for I bear you witness, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me*" (4:15).

What this infirmity of the flesh was, no one knows but it has been the subject of much speculation. Because he mentions they would have "*plucked out*" their eyes for him, some conclude Paul had bad eye sight. Others think that something more revolting than bad eyes would be Paul's infirmity, speculating that likely Paul was a "hunch back." Such speculation is senseless. No one knows, nor can know what Paul's infirmity was nor whether it was the same "*thorn in the flesh*" he mentions to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:7). The truth is there was something about Paul's physical features which would might have "turned off" some folks but did not affect the Galatians that way. They gladly received him and respected him so highly they would have made great sacrifices for his welfare -- even to have plucked out their eyes for him; would that have helped him. Now, they have quickly turned from him, leaving him with many questions about them. He has plainly told them the rites they were seeking to practice of Judaism would simply enslave them again (4:7). He has shown them there was no justification that could come out of the practice of the law; it would rather result in placing them under a curse (Gal. 3:10). He has shown them that they can become sons of Abraham, not by accepting circumcision but by imitating Abraham's faith (3:7; 28). Would they want to hear these things or would they become Paul's enemy because he told them the truth (4:16)? That was Paul's question for them.

There are many things which truth can do. It can sanctify (Jn. 17:17). It can make free (Jn. 8:31f). However, not all want the truth. People in Isaiah's day said to him, "*Prophecy unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits*" (Isa. 30:10). The adulterer does not want to hear that the relationship he is in will bring about his damnation. The liar does not want to hear that he, along with all other liars, will have his part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

The idolater does not like to hear that his god is no god at all, unable to deliver him from danger.

Indeed, truth can be unsettling, jarring and that which leaves us troubled and unable to sleep. Few people like to be in such a state. So what do some do when they hear something they do not like to hear? They become an enemy to him who has spoken the truth and often inflict injury upon him.

Stephen's accusers did not like the truth when he said, "*Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. Ye do always resist the truth, as ye fathers did, so do ye ...*" (Acts 7:51). They were so angry they gnashed on him with their teeth. Those who do not want the truth may imprison the messenger just as Ahab imprisoned Micaiah when he told him truth he did not want to hear (1 Kings 22:14-28). They may do as the Jews did when Paul said God told him that Jews would not hear him, he was to go to the Gentiles. When hearing these words, they were outraged and threw garments and dust into the air and clamored for the life of Paul (Acts 22:21-23). It is a sad, sad day when someone becomes our enemy because we have spoken the truth to him. It is sadder still for us when we become enemy to a gospel proclaimer because he had the courage to tell the truth to us! NEXT: "Ye That Desire To Be Under the Law ..."

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