

APPEAL TWO: RESTIR AFFECTION FOR THE MINISTER OF GOD GALATIANS 04:12–20

Introduction

A backsliding people need appeal after appeal, for they are walking a dangerous course when they turn their backs upon God. Also, a backsliding person is usually alienated from his minister: he wants little to do with the minister when he is turning away from God. The Galatian churches went even further. False teachers and critics of Paul had begun to attack Paul personally, both his person and his ministry. They were tearing down his character every way they could (see notes, Gal. 1:10-16; 2:3-5; etc.). There was great danger that the churches would reject his ministry; therefore, Paul had to do all he could to stop the chaos and to save the churches from destruction and apostasy. The present passage is an appeal for the believers to *remember and restir their* affection for the minister of God.

- I. Treat the minister of God as a brother (v. 12).
- II. Welcome true ministers of God (vv. 13-16).
- III. Guard against and reject false ministers (v. 17).
- IV. Receive true ministers – always (vv. 18-20).

I. Galatians 04:12 Duty Toward Ministers

Treat the minister of God as a brother. Remember that some in the churches of Galatia were criticizing and attacking Paul. But note several significant facts.

1. Paul called them brothers: he did not treat them as enemies, not even as antagonists. He did not murmur, gripe, complain or even attack them. The very opposite is true: he sensed and expressed deep brotherly affection for them.
2. Paul *pleaded* with them; that is, he was not commanding or instructing, but he was begging and pleading from the heart of a true minister of God.
3. Paul begged them to be as he was, for he had become one of them. He had always loved and cared and shown affection for them, and he wanted them to do the same for him – not to abandon and turn against him and his ministry.

It should be noted that many commentators understand Paul to be saying that he had become as they were, that is, a Gentile; therefore, he wanted them to remain as he was, a Gentile who trusted Christ, and not to turn to Jewish law in seeking God's approval.

4. Paul assured them that what they had done had not injured him: he held no bitterness, anger or malice against them.

Thought 1. The heart of a true minister is clearly seen in verse twelve: love, affection, kindness and care for a people who had become critics of the minister of God.

Thought 2. Believers must heed the appeal of the minister of God: “Become like me in affection and love — do not abandon and turn away from me.”

II. *Galatians 04:13–16 Welcome True Ministers*

Welcome the true ministers of God. There are three areas in which true ministers should be welcomed.

1. True ministers should be welcomed in their witness. Note: the Galatians had welcomed Paul when he first preached the gospel to them, and they had readily responded to his message. They did not question his call to preach nor the message he preached. There was no criticism nor censoring of his person or preaching. Their arms were wide open and their hearts were receptive.

Note that Paul was appealing for the same spirit of welcome and receptivity now. No other spirit should ever characterize God’s people — not toward the minister of God — not toward any child of God.

2. True ministers should be welcomed even in the illness and weakness of their flesh. Too often, this is not true. Churches and believers sometimes abandon and ignore the minister of God when he is stricken in body or spirit. When Paul first went to the Galatian churches, he was stricken with some illness. Just what the illness was is not known, although the best guess seems to be some serious eye problem (v.15. See note, 2 Cor 12:7-10. Also see Gal 6:11). The point is that the Galatians...

- did not despise him
- did not reject him
- received him as an angel or messenger from God Himself

This last fact stresses just how wide open the welcome to Paul was. There was no lack in receiving and caring for the minister of God. They would have even plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul if they had been able.

3. True ministers should be welcomed in the truth they proclaim. Paul had been proclaiming the truth: a person is justified by faith and not by law nor by works — not by trying to earn God’s acceptance by doing good deeds here and there. Was the church going to treat Paul as an enemy because he had told them the truth?

Thought 1. How many churches turn against the minister of God because he preaches and tells the truth? The church must always welcome the minister who speaks and proclaims the truth.

1 Th 5:13 *Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.*

1 Tim 5:17 *The elders [ministers] who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

Phil 2:29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him.

Heb 13:7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

III. Galatians 04:17 Guard Against False Ministers

Guard against and reject false ministers. Note that the false teachers (Judaizers, religionists) were zealous in their teaching and they were out to secure as large a following as possible. And note how they went about it: by excluding the people, trying to cut them off from the minister of God. They not only sought people through the merits of their own teaching, but they attacked and tore down the minister in order to alienate the people from him.

Note the difference between what the Christian minister (Paul) was doing and what the false teachers were doing. Or, to put it in the form of a question: What is the difference between the evangelistic efforts of the true minister of God and false teachers?

=> False teachers seek to focus people upon law, works, effort, ritual, ceremony, observances, sacrifice, rules and regulations — upon something that requires man to work at being good or doing good in order to become acceptable to God.

=> The true minister of God seeks to focus people upon God Himself: His love, honour and praise — upon the fact that God Himself has provided the way for man to become acceptable to Him, and that way is through His Son Jesus Christ. (See notes and *Justification*, Gal 2:15-16; *Faith vs. Works*, Gal 2:16; notes, Gal 2:19-21; 3:1-5; 3:6-14.)

Mat 7:15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Mat 5:19 “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Mat 15:9 “They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

Acts 20:30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Rom 10:3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

Rom 16:18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

Eph 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

1 Tim 4:1-2 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

Titus 1:10-11 *For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach — and that for the sake of dishonest gain.*

2 Pet 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

1 John 2:18-19 *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

1 John 2:22 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son.*

2 John 1:7 *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

IV. Galatians 04:18–20 Welcome True Ministers

Paul said that the church should always welcome the true ministers who seek to do well, ministers who labour for the church's welfare. Note that he was encouraging the church not only to accept his ministry but the ministry of other true ministers. They must reject false ministers and have nothing to do with them, but they must receive the ministry of true ministers in order to grow in Christ. Paul himself demonstrated three reasons why the church is to receive true ministers of God.

Thought 1. No believer or church should ever reject the ministry of a minister who seeks to help him and to help him grow in Christ.

1. True ministers hold believers within their hearts as *dear children*. The minister's heart is ever so tender, warm, caring, protecting and providing toward the church.
2. True ministers agonize over the growth of believers. They seek "Christ to be formed" in the believers. They want them living as Christ lived and conformed into the image of Christ.

Mat 23:37 *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.*

Acts 20:31 *So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*

2 Cor 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

1 John 3:2 *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

Jer 13:17 *But if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears, because the Lord's flock will be taken captive.*

3. True ministers guard the church against error. Note: if there is any doubt about the matter, he warns the church.

Phil 3:18 *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.*

John 14:20 *On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.*

Rom 8:29 *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

Ga1 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

2 Cor 3:18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. ■*