

Why I Keep Failing, Part 2 - Galatians 4:15-31 – September 24th, 2017

- Today's teaching will be part two of a series I've titled, "Why I Keep Failing."
- As we just read and as we're about to see, the Apostle Paul finds himself needing to rebuke and correct the Galatian churches.
- This because, they had failed miserably in being deceived by the Judaizers going back into the bondage and slavery to the law.

- As such, they fell prey to the insidious ugliness of legalism, which had shifted their focus onto what they have to do for God.
- This is what being a slave to the law does, such that, we are bound to that which requires us to earn and merit God's blessing.
- However, under grace it's not a matter of what I do for God, it's a matter of what God has already done for me, instead of me.

- Sadly, what the Galatian Christians were doing was going back under the law, which is the very thing that led to them failing.
- The reason being is that doing so would be like an inmate who served his time and was free, going back to a prison cell again.
- This is why Paul is trying to bring them back to their senses by explaining to them why what they were doing leads to failure.

1. I forfeit my freedom – (Verses 1-5)

- Here Paul explains to them that when we forfeit our freedom in Christ we subject ourselves to the laws and forces of nature.
- The problem with being subject to this is that under grace, God no longer deals with us on the basis of what we really deserve.
- In other words, the good we do cannot justify us, nor does the bad that we do condemn us when under grace and not the law.

2. I forget He's my loving heavenly Father - (Verses 6-14)

- What Paul is saying here is that we are no longer slaves to a taskmaster, rather, we are heirs as sons of our heavenly Father.
- In other words, we can have an intimate relationship with our heavenly Daddy, if you will, Who loves us no matter what we do.
- This unconditional "Agape" love from my Father is predicated upon that which Jesus did making me acceptable in God's sight.

3. I reject those who tell me the truth - (Verses 15-20)

15 Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 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 have zeal for them. 18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. 19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, 20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

- I have to confess that this is a difficult passage of scripture for me for a number of reasons, chief of which is they had hurt Paul.
- While we're not specifically told what Paul's illness was, it does seem that the Galatians were willing to do anything for him.
- The question becomes one of what happened that the Galatians would go from embracing Paul to now rejecting Paul instead.

- Simply put, Paul told them the cold hard truth and they didn't want to hear it because they had come under the Judaizers spell.
- It's for this reason that Paul tells them that these were zealously trying to alienate them from the truth to keep them enslaved.
- To me, this is textbook when it comes to cults; they alienate you from those who truly love you so you'll serve them as masters.

4. I rely on my own ability and strength – (Verses 21-31)

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. 24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written: "Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." 28 Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. 30 But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

- Paul is drawing upon one of my all time favorite miracles in the Bible, concerning the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah.
- He does so to paint a stark contrast between Ishmael and Isaac in that Ishmael is a work of the flesh, and Isaac of the Spirit.
- For the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with what happened, kindly allow me to share with you this fascinating true story.

- I'll close with what I see as the common denominator with all four of these reasons for failure and defeat in our Christian lives.
- In a word, pride. Pride says, I can do it; I don't need anyone, who do you think you are to judge me, and do you know who I am.
- If we're all honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that we all have this propensity for pride, which leads to destruction.

Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 13:10 - Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.

Proverbs 29:23 - A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.