

Introduction: Don't Look Back

Scripture is filled with sad examples of people who, having been delivered by the Lord, turned back from Him. Lot's wife disobeyed the Lord and looked back at Sodom (Gen. 19:17,26). Likewise, Israel, having left Egypt longed to return to slavery because of the things they enjoyed while there (Exod. 16:2-4; Num. 11:4-6). These instances stand as a warning to us about the sinful tendency to seek our comfort and happiness in the things of the world pursued for selfish reasons.

Main Point: Having been delivered by God from the penalty and power of sin, we must guard against _____ from Him to lesser things that will again _____ us.

Galatians 4:8-11

- **The condition of mankind apart from God is one of _____.** (v. 8)

(1) Paul speaks of the Galatians situation before coming to Christ.

“Formerly, when you did not know God...”

- _____ revelation means that all of humanity has a knowledge “of” God (Rom. 1:19-21), but that is not the same thing as being rightly related to Him.

(2) They lived under the influence of _____ religious practices.

“you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.”

- The various Greek and Roman deities were revered, but the region of Galatia was known for the worship of Cybele, the mother goddess as well as the imperial cult.

“enslaved”—δουλεύω (douleuō)—to conduct oneself in total service to another, perform the duties of a slave.

Greco-Roman Paganism

- Characterized by making _____ to gods as well as participation idolatrous _____.
- Religious _____ were celebrated according to a sacred calendar.
- The goal of these was to _____ spiritual forces to gain health, prosperity, and protection.
- While Paul does not deny the existence of spiritual powers behind idolatrous worship (1 Cor. 10:19-20; Col. 2:15), these powers are distinct from the One True God (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

Key Point: _____ and _____ create their own kind of slavery under the power of sin.

- **Knowing God does not automatically guard us from the _____ to turn from Him.** (v. 9)

(1) Paul contrasts their prior circumstances with the reality they have now come to experience.

“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God...”

- The Galatians have come to “know” God in the biblical sense (to “_____”).
- He first emphasizes their _____ of the relationship they now have with God.
- He then clarifies the nature of what has occurred with emphasis on what _____ has done.

“Thus here, as elsewhere in Scripture, experiential relations between God and his people are set out in terms of God's initiative and mankind's response. Relationship with God does not have its basis in man's seeking (mysticism) or doing (legalism) or knowing (Gnosticism), but it originates with God himself and is carried on always by divine grace.”

– R. Longenecker

- (2) In view of this, he asks them a direct question that highlights the _____ of what they are doing.
“how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world”

“turn back”—ἐπιστρέφω (epistrephō)—to change one’s mind or course of action, for better or worse, turn, return.

- The language here carries the connotations of conversion or apostasy.
- They are specifically returning to the “elementary principles of the world” which he had referenced previously when speaking of the religious practices of the Jews before the coming of Christ.
“weak” *“worthless”*
- Paul is not equating Jewish practices according to _____ with pagan religious practices (Rom. 9:4-5) as if they were the same kind of thing.
- Now that Christ has come, however, to place oneself under the Law in order to be rightly related to God is functionally the same because these practices are done according to the same _____ principles.

“The Galatians want to return to servitude, and Paul is incredulous that they can take even one step in that direction given the reality of their present spiritual experience of being known by God.” – M. Burer

Key Point: The world and the things of the world continually tempt us to turn away from the Lord and to seek _____ solutions to spiritual problems.

- The basis for our standing before the Lord is not dependent on our _____. (vv. 10-11).

- (1) He specifically mentions the practices that they are engaging in.

“You observe days and months and seasons and years!”

- This is a reference to the Jewish liturgical calendar.

- (2) Paul is grieved by their _____ and misappropriation of these Jewish practices.

“I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.”

- In one sense, there is nothing wrong with the observance of these things when they are rightly understood (Rom. 14:5-6).
- The Galatians, under the influence of these Jewish false teachers, believe that they cannot rightly be considered God’s _____ and be recipients of His _____ apart from keeping these according to the Law.

“With this short yet powerful transitional paragraph, Paul...highlights the inherent danger of the Galatians’ desire to become Law-observant...It would be essentially equivalent to their prior state when they were ignorant of God.” – M. Burer

Key Point: It is important to understand the difference in doing things _____ God and doing things to honor Him in light of what _____ has done for us in Christ.

Paul’s Message to the Galatians

The Galatians should not trade the genuine freedom that comes from being known by God for another form of slavery under the Law.

Concluding Thoughts

1. Idolatry and legalism are both systems that _____ and prevent us from truly honoring God in the things that we do in life.
2. In Christ, we are set _____ in order that we might live well as His people in the world He has made.
Col. 1:10-11—... walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;

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Main Point: Having been delivered by God from the penalty and power of sin, we must guard against turning from Him to lesser things that will again enslave us.

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➤ **General** revelation means that all of humanity has a knowledge “of” God (Rom. 1:19-21), but that is not the same thing as being rightly related to Him.

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- Characterized by making **offerings** to gods as well as participation idolatrous **feasts**.

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- The goal of these was to **manipulate** spiritual forces to gain health, prosperity, and protection.

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Key Point: Ignorance and unbelief create their own kind of slavery under the power of sin.

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