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### **Personal Study of the Bible-90 Galatians 4:11 – Laboring in Vain?**

Galatians 4:11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Galatians 4:11 φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς μή πως εἰκῆ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς.

“I fear for you” (φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς). The present active indicative of the verb demonstrates that this fear was a present and continuous reality in Paul. He is afraid *for them*. He was afraid for their spiritual lives because of the doctrinal error in their thinking. I doubt whether any believer in the congregation can really appreciate the anxiety any teaching pastor experiences with respect to the spiritual lives of those God has placed under his teaching. Paul could see the logical consequences of their legalistic thinking and knew where it would take them, namely departure from God.

“that perhaps I have labored over you” (μή πως εἰκῆ κεκοπίακα εἰς ὑμᾶς). Paul uses the perfect tense in “labored” to point to the intensity and completeness of his labor on their behalf. The word also points to laboring to the point of exhaustion.

“in vain” (εἰκῆ). If the Galatians revert back to the heresy of legalism, Paul’s labor over them would have been in vain. In other words, it would be fruitless. It is impossible for any believer to be fruitful in the spiritual life in legalism (Galatians) or licentiousness (e.g., Corinthians). Legalism has always been a greater problem for God’s people than licentiousness. No one in the Bible that I know, except some of the Romans and Corinthians, actually believed that sinning somehow glorified the grace of God (cf., Rom. 6:1; 1 Cor. 6:13). The most difficult problem is always related to legalism and self-righteousness. We see this throughout the Old Testament and with the Jews that opposed Jesus Christ. One thing that legalism and licentiousness have in common is a lack of desire for Truth. Once the people of God stop having a hunger and thirst for God, they stop loving truth as such and go downhill very quickly.

Principles:

1. For Scripture reading I would like for you to read an Old Testament book so you can see for yourself the philosophy of God as it relates to teaching the Word in addressing carnal believers. Also, note the various and sundry attitudes in believers when they do not live for God their Ultimate Good (carnal and reversionistic believers). Pay close attention to the entire tone of the book from God’s perspective as well as the people’s. What you will *not* find in Malachi, or in any book of the Bible, is an easygoing tone *designed to make carnal believers feel better*. What you will find throughout Malachi is God being very straightforward with believers, who have the *chutzpah* to dispute His love (1:2), rightful

position (1:6-7), covenant with them (2:14), justice (2:17), requirements (3:7-8), and His faithfulness (3:18). In sum, these believers thought that God did not love them because of difficulties in their lives. Note how forcefully God deals not only with their evil complacency, but His love for and faithfulness to them. Virtually every prophetic book of the Old Testament begins with the evils of the people, but how God still has a plan for Israel in the Millennium and throughout eternity. After you read Malachi, take a look at the notes in your study Bible to bring out more truths. Speaking anthropopathically, God's labor over Israel certainly seemed to be in vain. He brought them out of Egypt, and before you know it they were worshipping a golden calf. Then, after many years of divine discipline, like with the Assyrians in 721 B.C. and the Babylonians in 586 B.C., He provided for them to return and rebuild the Temple. Yet, what were they doing? Giving Him their sick and lame sacrifices (from their sick and lame hearts), all the while doubting His loving grace. Furthermore, I wonder how many thousands or hundreds of thousands of Old Testament believers simply walked away from the sixteen writing prophets of the Old Testament saying, "I did not come to hear that kind of message..."

2. To get a quick look at God's attitude to and future of a nation that has a history of anti-Semitism, read Obadiah, which describes the fulfillment of the never ending promise in Genesis 12:3.
3. The bottom line with any of us believers regardless of the dispensation in which God placed us is *our wills*. Recall the four positions of the will from Bible class. I will be spending more time on this in the next few classes with regard to Christ in the desert. If you carefully reflect on any person in the Bible, or in your life, positive (Paul) or negative (Demas), you will be able to see that it really is all about the will. It is the will that decides for God or against God, for concurrence or for deism, for God as Ultimate Good or for the things of this world. It is the will that is the most powerful capacity that any person possesses, both for good or evil. We all struggle with the attractions all of the temporal goods about us, and all we have to do to become evil is to choose them over the Ultimate Good of God Himself. The issue is keeping first things first. If we put God first, we can enjoy the Ultimate Good as well as the temporal goods He provides. But if we put temporal goods first, then we lose capacity for both. Don't be an idiot! Don't be evil!
4. A reminder, lest I labor for you in vain: *1 Timothy 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. 11 But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.*

Blessed,

Pastor Don