

Don Hargrove
Faith Bible Church
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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-91
Galatians 4:12 – “Become like me”

Galatians 4:12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;

Galatians 4:12 Γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ, ὅτι καὶ γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς, ἀδελφοί, δέομαι ὑμῶν. οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε.

Paul, in this new section (read Galatians 4:12-20), switches from a doctrinal and historical focus in dealing with their departure from grace to personally appealing to their memory of how they initially embraced grace alone and faith alone for salvation.

“*Brethren*” (ἀδελφοί). Paul uses this nomenclature to point to their mutual relationship as brothers in the royal family of God. Because the Galatians were beginning to think that Paul was an enemy because he was so hard on them regarding their doctrinal error (read Gal. 4:16), he wants to make sure they know that he is a fellow believer in the same family of God. He wanted to make sure that his love and concern for them were not doubted simply because he was so forceful with them in exposing their error and getting them back to God’s truth.

“*I urge you to become like me*” (Γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ . . . δέομαι ὑμῶν). The present imperative of “become” with the present tense in the verb for entreaty (“urge”) is very emphatic. When Paul begs them to become like him, he is not speaking of his personality or mannerisms. The context clearly points to his full acceptance of grace, complete rejection of human works for salvation (legalism), rejection of worldliness (with its approbation lusts), and full devotion to the pursuit of loving Jesus Christ in truth as the ultimate goal of life. Regarding his former life, read Philip. 3:5-6; for his life after salvation, read Philip. 3:7-14. What a difference! Before salvation, life was all about Paul, after salvation it was all about Jesus Christ and His righteousness. Prior to salvation, Paul lived in spiritual darkness. In spiritual darkness, Paul was very self-righteous. He tells us that he was the worst sinner who ever lived, but that God had *mercy* (mercy is not receiving deserved judgment) on him because of his ignorance; read 1 Timothy 1:16.

“*for I become like you*” (ὅτι καὶ γὰρ ὡς ὑμεῖς). Paul was once like the Galatians are now, namely legalistic. However, Paul laid aside legalism as a means of gaining God’s approval. Furthermore, Paul was like them when they accept grace for salvation. Both Paul and the Galatians initially rejected religion as a way of salvation. He is now a man of grace who also understood very well the pressures of legalism. In sum, he is telling them that he used to be legalistic like they are now, he also telling them that he accepted grace just like they *initially* accepted grace.

“*you have not injured me at all*” (οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε). Paul is pointing out that they have not done anything against him on a personal level. For this, he is very grateful. It is very important for every believer not to allow doctrinal issues to become personal. When someone falls into

false doctrines, the only issue is Truth. It is not about the man; it is about the message. There is absolutely no place for unfriendliness or hostility on the part of any believer toward anyone who is teaching him the Truth. Never let side issues, like mannerisms of the pastor-teacher, get in the way. Never let anything get in the way of learning the truth. Know that Satan is always trying to distort truth, and he has done a great job throughout Christianity, yes, even in certain areas in the doctrinal movement. Any attack on the teaching of a pastor-teacher better be accurate. If the pastor is correct in his teaching, then the attack is an attack on the God of Truth and Jesus Christ, Incarnate Truth. The issue of truth is simply too great to allow anything to get in the way. If you have a problem with your pastor's teaching, then you need to reflect long and hard as to why you have a problem with it. Make sure it is not because of your will, which often rejects teaching because it is too hard (too much trouble) or it does not flatter you or is not "pragmatic" (=allows you to be comfortable in your carnal, materialistic ways). By the way, every pastor-teacher should be accessible and open to all questions. However, if you question him in front of the congregation with a combative spirit or one that undermines cardinal doctrines of Christianity, do not be surprised if his response is a bit tough as he seeks to protect the rest of the flock. He understands like no one else, what happens when a believer takes a bite of an evil "apple." Certain errors must be forcefully rejected, even if it is done before others; read Galatians 2:11. We all know the difference between a believer who is honestly seeking answers to their questions, and questions that express disbelief in God, Christ, or essential doctrines of the Word of God.

Principles:

1. How do we apply the principle of Paul telling believers to become like him? As noted above, the issue is truth and grace; it is doctrinal, not personal. Paul is not telling the Galatians that they should copy his personality traits or clichés. Believe me, as great as Paul *is*, he was not sinless and he, like all of us, had sinful and evil tendencies due to the weaknesses of his sinful human nature. So, how would this principle apply as far as you and your pastor-teacher? How should believers 'be like their pastors'? I would suggest that you strive to be like your pastor in all the things you see in him that is of God, all the while rejecting all of those things in him that does not line up with objective Bible doctrine. I have been pastor-teacher of FBC for almost 19 years (next month). I am an example both of what you should follow and what you should not follow. You should follow my dedication to truth and my insistence of living in fellowship with God (as per our 1995 fellowship studies and our 2014 2nd person relationship with God studies). However, there are many things you have witnessed in me that you should not follow. For example, I tend to become too strident in battling against false doctrine; I tend to lose my patience with Christians who are *willfully* and *arrogantly* ignorant about the need for Whole Truth. We have been together for many years. I will have to admit that I have taught some heretical ideas that I have received from my pastor-teachers (my view of heresy is any teaching that goes against what is explicitly taught in Scripture), which have influenced believers under my ministry with deistic views of God and creation, Cartesian and Platonic views regarding the nature of man, Platonic and Gnostic views about virtue (= doctrine resident in the soul), and anti-intellectualism (= little to no knowledge of God gained through natural revelation). For this I am extremely sorry and will certainly have to face the Lord for this at the Judgment Seat of Christ. My job is to teach correct doctrine—period. There is no excuse for me following, for so many years, simply

what I was taught in the doctrinal movement. Mea culpa! Perhaps all of my accurate teaching on the primacy of fellowship will offset false teachings on the nature God, man, and creation when I am evaluated by the Lord. I assure you my false teachings on these subjects bother me a great deal more than the times I have lost my temper in facing opposition to teaching the Whole Truth. I am redoubling my efforts to correct the false teachings and to be more patience with those who oppose Total Truth (of course, without compromising). I do understand the critical need for philosophical realism as well as for love and patience toward troublemakers with their pathological wills. I have been seriously studying the Word of God for about 35 years. I never realized the need for philosophical realism. I thought that all I needed was the original languages. I never realized just how much ungodly philosophy I, and my former pastors, were using in the study and teaching of the Word of God. I intend to correct the problem with the hope that future generations of pastors will get grounded in the biblical philosophy of realism so that *all* the wonderful doctrines of the Word of God can be seen in their metaphysical and transcendent light of the True, Good, and Beautiful.

2. As far as Paul's comment that "you have not injured me at all," I would like to thank all of those who have supported the teaching of truth at FBC. Your love for truth makes my job truly satisfying. We have believers who have been with us from the beginning who are as anxious to learn God's truth as when I first taught back in 1995. We have also been tremendously blessed with believers who have joined us over the last few years who have demonstrated a true love for God's Truth from the whole truth perspective. What an inspiration! It is a blessing to be the pastor of all those at FBC as we all seek to move forward in the plan of God and to our ultimate and final destination! Each day brings us a step closer to our Lord. Let's make every attempt to be ready!

On the Glory Road,

Pastor Don