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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Bible Study-99
Galatians 4:17 – Zeal and Love

Galatians 4:17, *They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them* (KJV). Greek, ζηλοῦσιν ὑμᾶς οὐ καλῶς, ἀλλὰ ἐκκλείσαι ὑμᾶς θέλουσιν, ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε = *they are zealous for you, [but for] no good, they are desiring to exclude you in order than you may have zeal for them.*

- Paul is dealing with a congregation that is distracted from his teaching on the total truth about grace. He is pointing out that they are being manipulated by false teachers. He desires that they change their attitudes toward him. One of the most difficult things for any teacher of truth is when believers view him negatively because their wills, for one reason or another, have turned from desiring truth to some form of subjectivity. Instead of being truth-seekers, such believers view Christianity in terms of pragmatism. When this occurs, the believer leaves the realm of objective reality and moves into some form of idealism, where reality is defined in terms of what is in the mind rather than external reality. It is no longer about what is true, it is now about “political/spiritual correctness” and evaluating truth claims based on what believers think of communicator rather than the content of his message.
- Note that the false teachers, the legalists, were courting the Galatians to get them to join their legalistic camp. The Judaizers neither loved Truth nor the Galatians. Instead of loving the Galatians in truth, they were preying on them for their own use. Flattery is one of the most effective means of deceiving someone. Flattery has a way of blinding believers who are not grounded in Truth. Cults often exhibit great zeal for and feigned interest in prospective members. They fawn over their subjects in an effort to get them to join their group. They know just the right buttons to push to make people feel loved or to frighten them enough to join them.
- There are a couple of things I would like to point out about “zeal.” First, zeal must never be used as a means of a criterion of truth. Due to influences of subjectivity and idealism, many Christians today believe that if someone has zeal for something, then it must be true. While zeal may be an indication of a person’s love for Truth and the Lord, and its absence may indicate spiritual decadence (read Rev. 3:14-22 and note the problem of indifference and the Lord’s twofold solution), people can have zeal for the wrong things. These legalists had a zeal for their own self-righteousness, which made them reject the sufficiency of grace alone for salvation.

- Second, note that the same word, “zeal” (ζηλόω) is used in this verse and the next verse for good and bad zeal. I point this out because it is important to build reality on being (external reality) rather than word studies (a form of idealism). I have much to say about this in philosophy of language at a later time. I just want you to note that exegesis alone is not going to give anyone objective interpretation. Again, it is the same word, used in two different ways in the same context.
- For characteristics of false teachers, read Jer. 6:13; Mat. 7:15; Acts 20:30; Rom. 16:18; 2 Cor. 2:17; 11:13-15; Gal. 6:12; 1 Tim. 4:1; 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:6; Philip. 1:15-17; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4.
- In our last Bible class, I noted that love is not to be reduced to merely a relaxed mental attitude or an impersonal concept. While I understand the motive behind such nomenclature, I believe this language tends toward a depreciation of the notion of love contained throughout the Word of God (even if the original teaching of these concepts included definitions that included more than just a relaxed or impersonal attitude). We are in our final stages of examining the human intellect and will, and we will conclude this study with an examination of how the human intellect relates to Truth (and is designed for wisdom) and the human will relates to good (love). In the meantime I would like for you to note the various passages on love and *see* just how much action is involved: Gen. 29:18; 34:3; 37:3-4; Mat. 6:24; Rom. 13:10; 14:15; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Gal. 5:13-25; 1 John 2:3-6; 3:16-18. The truth of the matter is that every single thing you or I do is out of love, be it love for good or evil, be it love for being responsible and going to work, or be it love for the Lord and making the issue in your life growing in His grace. We are always drawn to what we think is our good, which is just another way of saying we are always drawn by what we love, be it food (Gen. 27:14), wife (Gen. 29:18), or materialism vs. the Lord (Mat. 6:24). We are always *working for and moving toward* what we love. This is true of sin as well. When we sin, it is because we love some good in that sin, usually some short-term pleasure. Furthermore, we are always thinking and dreaming about those things that we love the most. Only the growing believer has the distinct advantage of treasuring the Lord and the things of God. Indeed, his love for the Lord and His Word is very active in his life in all that he does. We are blessed at FBC to have so many believers who demonstrate their love for the Lord by their love for the teaching of His Word in Total Truth and love for each other. Such believers do not come to class to be flattered or courted, they come because they really want the whole truth. If was not for such an attitude, we never would be able to advance in the truths as far as we have. Thanks!

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don