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

**Personal Bible Study-101**  
**Galatians 4:20-21—Grace or the Law?**

**Galatians 4:20** but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you (ἤθελον δὲ παρῆναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἄρτι καὶ ἀλλάξαι τὴν φωνήν μου, ὅτι ἀποροῦμαι ἐν ὑμῖν. = but I am wishing to be present face-to-face with you now and change my voice/tone, for I am confused/perplexed about you).

1. Paul is expressing his desire to be with the Galatians so he can address them with face-to-face communication to deal with their heresy of legalism. Consider the metaphysics involved in this communication—recall that metaphysics deals with the *natures* of things. Consider how the nature of what is communicated is affected by tone. For example, once I told my wife, “after being married to you, I would never want to be married again.” Consider how the tone I use affects the meaning. Saying this with a tone of disgust or despair would convey one thought. Making this statement with a tone that conveys my priceless love for her, means something else. Do I consider the marriage so horrible that I would never want to be married again? Or do I consider her such a prize that I would never want anyone else? The words are the same, but the nature (metaphysics) changes simply by my tone and inflection. The point here is that everyone does metaphysics, even by their very intonation. Note how intensely someone, who is really interested in what someone else is saying, looks at the person talking to get the full meaning of what is being said—as they attempt to abstract as much reality as possible about what is communicated through the communicator. To think metaphysically requires the practice of thinking metaphysically. Like anything else, the more you practice the more you see metaphysical realities like this. This is just one example to think about. Paul’s statement, moreover, indicates that it is more difficult to convey the tone of his concern for them by writing. Face-to-face communication can communicate the reality of attitudes that is more difficult by writing alone. Of course we can all objectively grasp the significance of him mentioning his tone because of what he revealed in the text, namely his desire to change his tone. We know what he means because we share the same human nature as Paul. More later . . .
2. “Now” (ἄρτι) is used to emphasize Paul’s urgent desire to address the legalistic heresy. He recognizes that this is a grave period of time for the Galatian church’s health.
3. “I am confused/perplexed about you.” Paul was perplexed at how the Galatians left grace for legalism. Read Galatians 1:6-7. Any spiritual leader who loves truth will undoubtedly experience a certain amount of frustration in his ministry with believers who no longer love, seek, and are committed to Truth. We can see both Paul’s concern as well as his sensitivity to his own tone at the Galatians.

4. We live in a very subjective and sensitive time when people are more in tune with a tone of a pastor who teaches God's Word than the content of the message. This has a lot to do with modern influences of political correctness than a healthy attitude to objective truth. It is important to stay focused on the content of what he is saying. If you ever find yourself asking "why is he so upset?" you need to look at the answer in the content of what he is saying, rather than looking for psychological and other subjective factors. If you focus on what he is saying, you are more likely to see the importance of the doctrine he is addressing. If you focus on him, you are likely to be focused on his personality. His personality is not the issue. Truth is the issue. At the same time, the pastor needs to reflect on his tone and make adjustments to the degree that he can do that and still maintain the strong emphasis on a certain doctrine that may be in danger of being ignored or rejected.

**Galatians 4:21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?** (Λέγετέ μοι, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι, τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε; = Tell me, you who wish to be under [the authority of] the law, do you not hear the law?)

1. After expressing his sensitivity to his harsh tone, Paul gets right back to His stinging rebuke of the Galatians for their legalism—their departure from grace. Even though Paul wished to change his tone, this does not mean that he is willing to change his teaching or exacting demands that the law not be inserted in the grace life.
2. He is asking them if they have really "listened" to the law. For what the law brings, read Galatians 3:10-14.
3. This verse indicates that some Galatians have not completely defected: they were just "wishing" to go back to the law. He wants them to think about the disastrous results of going back to the law. They have forgotten that God, not the law or morality, was their first cause, last end, and therefore should be the focus of their lives rather than rules and regulations.
4. This verse begins a section that uses allegory as a teaching tool, which I will cover in the next lesson. As Americans, by nature we are a bit allergic to allegories. They always require hard and deep thinking. Most Americans do not mind learning all kinds of difficult things for their jobs, but for some reason when they come to the Word of God, they treat it like it should not require a great deal of intellection and reflection—even though the Word of God deals with life and everything else at the most fundamental level.

#### **PRINCIPLES:**

1. Man can build an entire life on morality, like the Stoics and Immanuel Kant, and thus avoid problems associated with hedonism, materialism, and immorality, but, nonetheless, still live under the curse of God because lack of receiving God's grace. Grace is antithetical to human \_\_\_\_ (Rom. 11:6).

2. When Christians realize that they are free from the demands of the Law, some may use that freedom to indulge the sins of the \_\_\_\_ (Gal 5:13).
3. We are saved by grace with a view toward \_\_\_\_ (Eph. 2:8-10).
4. What matters is not the Law, but being a new \_\_\_\_ (Gal 6:15).
5. Rather than requirements of the law being the issue, the issue is faith working by \_\_\_\_ (Gal 5:5-6).
6. Christ is the \_\_\_\_ of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).
7. Christ redeemed us from the law by becoming a \_\_\_\_ for us Law (Gal. 3:13)
8. What is incurred when someone attempts to work for salvation or spiritually? \_\_\_\_ (Rom. 4:4)
9. What does one receive simply by believing? \_\_\_\_ (Rom. 4:5).
10. The sin nature cannot be controlled by rules from any Law or by any *mechanical* “*spiritual*” *life*. What is required for the elevation of our fallen human natures to see and love God and the things of God is to walk by the power of the \_\_\_\_ (Gal. 5:16). The Holy Spirit is God working in us producing the supernatural spiritual life. Either one will attempt to fulfill God’s mandates through some system of law (or by pushing some spiritual buttons), or he will walk with God and enjoy the fruit of God producing through Him such things as mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. The choice: try to live the Christian life in your own power or live with God and enjoy what He brings in and through the life. Quo Vadis?

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don