

(12) Brothers, I entreat you --- become as I am --- for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God. What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

(16) Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you....

Think on these things:

- 1) When Jesus lived, He called to Himself 12 “disciples,” men He developed, tutored and mentored for 3 years. After He rose from the dead, He sent His disciples out as His “apostles,” the ones He entrusted with the Great Commission. Paul was not among them at that time, but Jesus set Paul apart on the road to Damascus as the apostle to the Gentiles. Next, however, the apostles did not, in turn, have their own disciples. Rather, the Bible speaks of a new concept. See if you can find that word in 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 11:1, Ephesians 5:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and Hebrews 6:12. What should we be doing today (based especially on Hebrews 6:12)?

- 2) Paul says in vs. 12b-14 that the Galatians “did me no wrong...though my condition was a trial to you.” Let’s see if we can identify Paul’s “condition” by examining these scriptures:

Acts 9:3-19 (physical impact to Paul from God’s light) - _____

2 Corinthians 11:22-27 (some of Paul’s experiences as a missionary) - _____

Galatians 4:15 and 6:11 (clues to Paul’s challenge) - _____

- 3) Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What did God say “no” to Paul about to keep him from being conceited as a Christian leader given heavenly visions (12:1-6)? Can you share a time that God said “no” to you about a request you made to Him in prayer?

- 4) Paul passed through Galatia briefly on his 2nd missionary journey, but stayed and visited some churches on his 3rd missionary journey. What does he acknowledge was special to him about the treatment he received from the Galatian churches (vs. 13-15)? How did they welcome him?

- 5) V. 16 is a telling verse about personal relationships. What happens when we choose to be truthful with those we love and care for?! Have you ever been given a “tough” truth from someone close to you? How did you receive it (you don’t have to answer...)? However, let’s see what Proverbs 27:6 has to say about tough truth!

- 6) V. 17 says these people “make much of you” (are “zealous to win you over”, NIV) --- but for no good purpose. Who are these people again, the ones bothering the Galatian churches?

- 7) From v. 18, does Paul object to when people “make much of you”? What is his caution in v. 17 that mirrors Proverbs 27:6? How do you know when this happens to you?

- 8) Why is Paul in the anguish of childbirth (v. 19) and perplexed by the Galatians (v. 20), wishing he could change his tone with them? Consult Galatians 3:1 and Romans 8:29. What is God’s goal for you? (By the way, this is the “only” comparison a Christian should make with another...!)

People and situations I want to pray for this week: