

(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)?

We are to become “imitators.” Hebrews – Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit God’s promises. (These are the faithful ‘non-quitters’ in the faith, those standing firm.)

- 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) – **Paul was blinded by the bright light from heaven. When his sight was restored, “scales” fell off his eyes.**

2 Corinthians 11:22-27 (some of Paul’s experiences as a missionary) – **Countless beatings to near death, 5X given 39 lashes, 3X beaten with rods, stoned for dead, 24 hours adrift at sea.**

Galatians 4:15 and 6:11 (clues to Paul’s challenge) – **Galatians 4:15 – gouge out your eyes to give them to me. Galatians 6:11 – Vision-challenged, Paul wrote in large letters.**

- 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?

Though Paul begged God three times to take it away, God required Paul to continue suffering with his “thorn in the flesh.”

- 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?

Though his visit was a trial to them, he wasn't despised or scorned. Rather, they embraced him as if he was one of God's angels.

- 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!

Personal responses. Proverbs = Faithful are the "wounds" of a friend. We are better off when we listen to those who are "on our side" and share honestly.

- 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?

Jewish converts to Christianity who formed the "Circumcision Party", demanding Gentiles undergo changes to become Jews before taking the steps of faith to become Christians.

- 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?

No, Paul understands. "Making much of you" is something like edification --- encouraging and building each other up in the family of God. However, some people are working 'angles' with their flattery, i.e., buttering us up so they can get something they want or think they need. How do we know which it is? Maybe when people drop their time and interest in us on short notice and for no discernable reason.

- 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...!)

Paul is waiting for Christ to be formed WITHIN them. Right now, though, they seem unsettled, ungrounded, floundering and flip-flopping among many new ideas...!

Romans teaches us that we are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. The only proper comparison of how I live as a Christian is to check myself against how Jesus lived His life while on earth. (We don't compare ourselves to other people, only to Jesus.)

People and situations I want to pray for this week: