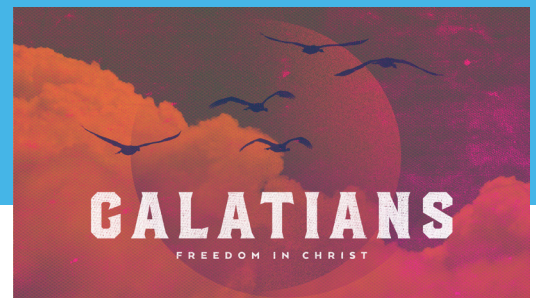


# Discussion Questions

May 31, 2026



## Galatians 4:8-20 - Come Back

This week we sat with Paul as he pleads with the Galatians in chapter 4:8-20. We opened with Horatio Spafford, who wrote "It Is Well With My Soul" out of profound loss but later drifted so far from the gospel that his church no longer recognized his faith as Christian. He started well, but he didn't finish well. That is exactly what Paul is watching happen to the Galatians. People who once received the gospel with joy and welcomed Paul as if he were Christ himself are now running back to boundary markers and "weak and beggarly" principles, slavery with religious wallpaper on it. So Paul puts down his theological argument and begins to plead. He reminds them the relationship began with God knowing them, not the reverse, and names the appeal of legalism: the comfort of a checklist that hands us control and tells us exactly where we stand, over against the trust that grace requires. He exposes the false teachers' strategy, flatter, isolate, dominate, and then speaks as a mother in labor, agonizing until Christ is formed in them, slowly and over time. The hard warning underneath it all is that religiosity, the very thing that looks like getting serious about God, was hardening them against the outsider. The invitation for us is to take an honest look at our own fruit, drop the checklists, and come back to the freedom of the true gospel.

1. Read Galatians 4:8-11. What specific things are the Galatians running "back again" to? Notice how Paul corrects himself mid-sentence in verse 9: "now that you know God, or should I say, now that God knows you." Why is that distinction so crucial to him, and what does it tell us about where our security in the gospel actually rests?
2. The sermon noted there is real comfort in a checklist because it hands us control and tells us exactly where we stand. What modern religious checklists do we use today to measure our own righteousness, or to quietly judge others, and why is trusting in grace often scarier than relying on rules?
3. Read verses 12-16. The Galatians once welcomed a sick, weak Paul "as though I were an angel from God," and now treat him like an enemy for telling them the truth. What changed? What does verse 16, "Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth?" reveal about what was happening in their hearts?
4. The message described two cultural ditches: believing love means affirming whatever anyone feels no matter what, versus disguising harshness as "truth-telling." We talked about "truthing in love" truth as actions, not just words, and one person who kept coming back through hard truths because they felt so deeply loved by the body. What does it look like today for us to stay on the road between those ditches and make hard truth bearable?
5. Read verses 17-18 and the false teachers' three-step pattern, flatter, isolate, dominate. How does counterfeit affirmation create dependence on the affirmer, and how is that fundamentally different from the way real affirmation pushes us deeper into Christ and sets us free?
6. Read verses 19-20. Paul agonizes like a mother in labor until "Christ is fully developed, "formed," in them. The sermon emphasized the difference between being informed and being formed, and the sobering possibility of spending decades in "Gospel Plus" religion and ending up harder and smaller than the day you started. Where do we tend to settle for acquiring biblical information instead of undergoing real formation, and what produces the hardening?
7. The author of "It Is Well," Horatio Spafford drifted not because he stopped loving Jesus, but because he stopped resting in pure grace and started building his own system. Over this last season, are there any areas where you have been increasingly less generous, gentle, and patient, or quicker to judge, dismissive, and prone to "us vs. them"? Is there an area where you've stopped letting Scripture confront you, and what is one concrete way you can "come back" to grace this week?

### Closing Prayer Prompt

Invite each person to sit silently with the question that closed the message: "Lord, is my heart increasingly reflecting your joy, freedom, and love this season? Am I being formed more into your image? Am I letting your truth confront my life?" Close by praying for the specific areas of drift named tonight.

**Galatians 4:12-16,19-20 (NLT)**

Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to live as I do in freedom from these things, for I have become like you Gentiles - free from those laws. You did not mistreat me when I first preached to you. Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News. But even though my condition tempted you to reject me, you did not despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even Christ Jesus himself. Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth?

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. I wish I were with you right now so I could change my tone. But at this distance I don't know how else to help you.

**Galatians 4:8-11 (NLT)**

Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. So now that you know God, or should I say, now that God knows you, why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. I fear for you. Perhaps all my hard work with you was for nothing.

**Galatians 4:9-10 (NLT)**

Why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world? You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. I fear for you.

**Galatians 4:12 (NLT)**

Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to live as I do in freedom from these things, for I have become like you Gentiles, free from those laws.

**Galatians 4:13-14 (NLT)**

Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News. But even though my condition tempted you to reject me, you did not despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God, or even Christ Jesus himself.

**Galatians 4:15-16 (NLT)**

Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. Have I now become your enemy because I am telling you the truth?

**Proverbs 27:6 (NLT)**

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

**"Truthing in Love"****Galatians 4:17-18 (NLT)**

Those false teachers are so eager to win your favor, but their intentions are not good. They are trying to shut you off from me, so that you will pay attention only to them. If someone is eager to do good things for you, that is all right, but let them do it all the time, not just when I am with you.

**Flatter    Isolate    Dominate**

**Galatians 4:19-20 (NLT)**

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. I wish I were with you right now so I could change my tone, but at this distance I do not know how else to help you.

**Until Christ is formed in you**

**Lord is my heart increasingly reflecting your joy, freedom, and love in this last season?  
Am I being formed more into your image?**