

The plucking out of eyes is a figure of speech which shows how gracious the Galatians were to Paul at one time. Some commentators think that Paul is referring to an eye condition which troubled the apostle. There are indications in other epistles and in the last chapter of this epistle that Paul had trouble with his eyes. Perhaps one of the Galatian Christians expressed to the apostle that he wished he could give his good eyes to Paul.

- e. verse 16 - "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

The apostle reminds his hearers of the past, how that they felt themselves blessed when they were given the truth. A change took place in the relationship between the church and the apostle. Paul points out that his message has not changed nor has his love for the Galatians changed. The evident implication is that a change has taken place in the Galatian church. If someone points out our sin and we respond by repenting and trusting the Lord we feel very close to the one who brought us the message. However, if someone points out sin in our lives and we reject the message, the messenger often becomes a bitter enemy as far as we are concerned. Truth received brings blessing; truth rejected brings bitterness.

In our day this principle can be clearly seen in regard to ecclesiastical separation. The principle of separation from apostasy and unbelief is very clearly taught in the Scriptures. Many of the major denominations are controlled by unbelievers and yet many true Christians remain in these denominations. These who compromise their position often exhibit intense bitterness toward those who take a separated position. I believe in some cases this bitterness arises from the rejection of the truth on this particular point. Luther certainly met with this attitude when he led the 16th century reformation. He comments, "Nowadays the name of Luther carries the same stigma (as Paul's.) Whoever praises Luther is a worse sinner than an idolater, perjurer, or thief."

2. Those Who Changed the Love of the Galatians for Paul (verses 17 and 18)

- a. verses 17 and 18 - "Oh, I know how keen these men are to win you over, but can't you see that it is for their own ends? They would like to see you and me separated altogether, and have you all to themselves. Don't think I'm jealous - it is a grand thing that men should be keen to win you, whether I'm there or not, provided it is for the truth." (Phillip's Translation)

"These men" of course are the Judiazers that sought to court the Galatians and win them away from Paul. Paul draws the contrast between his motive for winning them and the motive of these men. They simply wanted the Galatian church to serve their own purposes. Paul was only interested in their being won to Christ. This is clear from what he says in verse 18. Paul is not concerned about other men taking over the leadership of the Galatians provided they stand for the truth. John Eadie comments in his respected commentary on Galatians: "Had the change of feeling toward him been only characteristic caprice, he would have cared less; but it involved a departure from the gospel which he had proclaimed, and which was divine alike in origin, substance, and results." Paul was not interested in building up a following for himself and neither should this be our concern. His interest was that people come to Christ and abide in the truth.

3. Paul's Unchanged Love for the Galatians (verses 19 and 20)

- a. verses 19 and 20 - "My little children, for whom I am again suffering birth pangs until Christ is completely and permanently formed (molded) within you! Would that I were with you now and could coax you vocally, for I am fearful and perplexed about you."

The thought here is connected with verse 18 in the following way: "I have a right to ask for constancy in your affections. I have a greater claim on you than these new teachers. They speak but as strangers to strangers; I as a mother to her children with whom she has travailed." (Lightfoot)