

## Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

### Relapse or Regression (Backsliding or Abandoning)

Galatians 4:8-11

#### 1. Definition of Terms:

Below are terms that I will be using in the sermon to help describe what is going on in the text. There

- A. Regression: An act of going or coming back. Particularly movement backward to a previous and especially worse state or condition. Reversion to a previously occupied level or station. All of this, with an idea of finality.
- B. Relapse: The act or instance of backsliding or worsening. To slip back or fall back into a former, and worse, state of being. This with an idea of being temporary.
- C. Apostate: A person who currently does not believe in Christ who at one time fulfilled one or more of the following criteria: (a) professed faith in Christ, (b) lived with the appearance of righteousness (c) held offices of influence or honor in the Christian community (d) professed a genuineness of Christian experience, etc. An Apostate would be someone who regressed from profession of faith into a manner of living and believing that denied the gospel.

#### 2. Prior to Salvation, the Galatian Christians

- A. Did Not Know God  
Other than a basic knowledge that God exists and a basic understanding of the law written on the heart of man, people do not know the true God (Ps. 14:1; 19:1ff).
- B. Were Enslaved to False Gods  
Prior to Christ, all people were the slaves of sin and whoever or whatever they served, it was not God (Jn. 8:34; Ro. 6:6, 16-20; 7:14-25; Ti. 3:3).

#### 3. Following a Positive Response to the Gospel, the Galatian Christians

- A. Came to Know and Be Known by God (cf. Rom. 8:29-30).
- B. Now Are Desiring the Things From Which They Were Saved (1 Th. 1:9)

#### 4. The False Gods of the World: Described

- A. Weak - False gods are impotent, God is omnipotent (Isa. 44:6-8; 46:8-10).
- B. Worthless - False gods are bankrupt, and have no actual value (cf. Mk. 12:42; Lk. 16:20).

C. Elemental - The things of the world, the religions and the philosophies, do not progress past a basic or elementary understanding of who God is (Col. 2:8, 20; cf. Ps. 19:1ff; Rom. 1:18-23).

#### 5. A Fear of Regression:

- A. Once a person is born again, they irrevocable eternal life (cf. John 10:24-30).
- B. All people who are born again will bear fruit (John 15:1ff)
- C. Many people have a Christian experience visible to many and believed by many, but are lost and condemned (Matt. 13:1ff; cf. Heb. 6:4-8)
- D. The final state of regression (apostasy) is worse than the life prior to a profession of faith largely due to the level of knowledge and accountability that they have (2 Pet. 2:20).
- E. Those who fall away, or regress, to a former life of opposing Christ (apostatize) never experienced the new birth (John 3:16).
- F. The difference between relapsing and regression (temporarily stumbling and permanent apostatizing) is difficult, if not impossible, to discern during the life of the individual (Gal. 4:11).