



# Galatians 4: 8-14

## Why Turn Back? Part II

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*2 November, 2025*

**Sunday 9 A.M. Study in Galatians**



8. However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 9. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

10. You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

12. I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; 13. but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14. and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.





10. You observe days and months and seasons and years.

- i. You observe: ***you keep on keeping fast*** to the days, months, seasons and years. As a present, middle voice, they are intensely interested in their own profit from this religious observance [Merryman].
- ii. He calls it: scrupulously and meticulously. He says: legalists are notorious nitpickers. They major in the minors and they minor in the majors
- iii. What are our majors?
- iv. A good mission statement for the Galatians would be the one he provided to the Colossians: (ch. 1)
- v. **days**: are weekly sabbaths
- vi. **Months**: the Jewish new moons
- vii. **Seasons**: the annual schedule of feast weeks (*Passover, Feast of unleavened bread, Day of Atonement*) \*
- viii. Bonus question: why aren't Christians not to set aside SATURDAY as their day of sabbath/(rest) and worship?

(I) ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

**IT IS NOW EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK!** Heb. 3 & 4: we are entered into His rest. .... Matt. 11:28 *'I will give you rest...'*

\* GALATIANS: GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO LEGALISM; RONALD C. MERRYMAN, DULUTH, MN, PG. 68



11. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

I am presently *fearing for you*— *pres. tense & middle voice*— he has great personal interest and investment in their turning from grace-promise-faith way of salvation and sanctification

Maybe all my labor was all a wasted effort

This echoes 3:4: *Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?*

### Paul's rhetorical strategy:

He Switches Rhetoric method:  
(CONTRAST WITH):

#### REASONED ARGUMENTS:

1. From their personal experience: 3:1-5 (*how did you receive the H.S.? Christ was displayed as publicly crucified before you...*)
2. From O.T. Teaching: 3: 6-14 (*Abraham believed God...*)
3. From Priority of Abraham's Promise: 3:15-22: (*law inferior*)
4. From perspective of Superiority of Maturity: (*Sonship*) 3:23-4:7

#### ARGUMENT FROM PERSONAL PLEA:

*I beg of you... become as I am. . . You did not loathe or despise me, but treated me as an angel . . . 4:11-14*

LATER: Paul reverts back to rhetorical reasoning in 4:21-31: Law v. Bondage (Sarah v. Hagar)



11. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

i. Has it been all in vain? – was all my work— (to the point of exhaustion)- with you fruitless? [Wuest]

(a) Paul did not want his efforts to be without lasting effect; devoid of lasting value due to the Judaizers' success in drawing them away from grace to the law-merit-works system

“Such a reaction from the higher way of faith back to the old way of ritual could have only a damaging effect on the lives of the Galatians. There is no spiritual darkness more dense than the darkness brought on by light rejected. The return to bondage would be fatal to spiritual progress, and would produce a result quite opposite to that which they sought, in turning to legalism for perfection.” M.C. Tenney

**The Galatians' Desire to turn back find them in good company with those who are supervising their reversal:**

The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, “Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.” NUM. 11: 4,5

\* GALATIANS: THE CHARTER OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY; MERRILL C. TENNEY WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING, GRAND RAPIDS, MI , 1950;57, PG130



11/02/25

HHBC 9 AM  
Galatians  
Study.  
Ch.4:8-12,  
pt. II;  
A.MOLLOY

But, for going back,  
we again GET:



Num. 11: 4,5

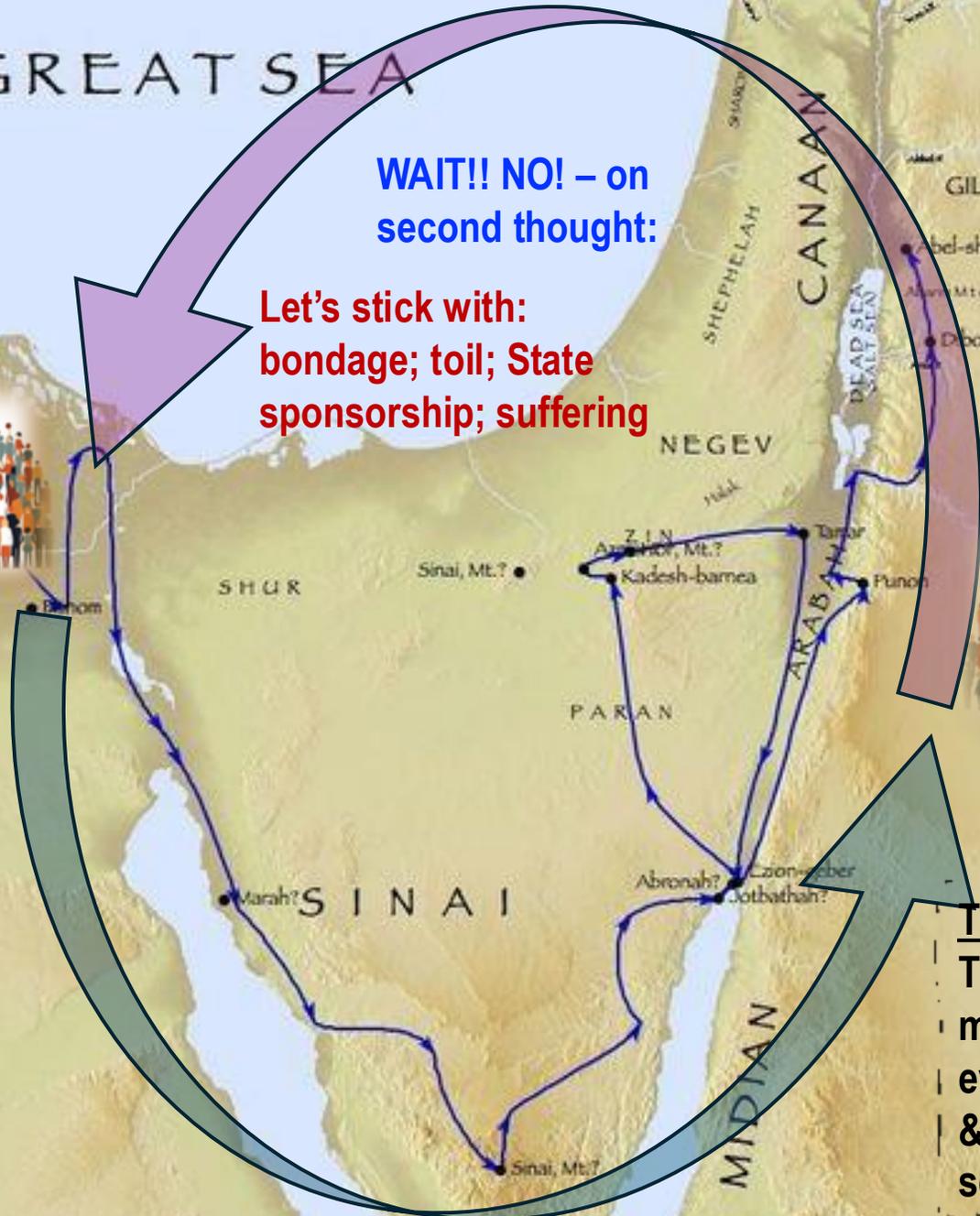


Nile R.

GREAT SEA

WAIT!! NO! – on  
second thought:

Let's stick with:  
bondage; toil; State  
sponsorship; suffering



This Way WE GET:

The Promised Land, Land flowing with  
milk & honey; God's protection on  
every side; adoption as sons; the glory  
& covenants; giving of the Law; temple  
services; promises [Rom. 9:4]

12. I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;

1. Now: we are at the tender term: brothers; all the way from 'you foolish Galatians'!

2. **Become as I am:**

- Free from legalism
- Accepted in the Beloved
- Blessed with every spiritual blessing
- Heavenly
- Holding to an inheritance
- Holy, blameless before the Father in love
- Sealed in Him with the H.S. of promise [from Eph. 1]

**For I have become as you are:**

- Arrived to them and lived as a Gentile
- Did not reference the Mosaic law in his living [think of how Peter failed in this]
- Became one with them in Christian compassion
- He gave up his Jewish credentials
- Ate with them, suffered with them etc...
- So that; they may see Christ in him and become imitators of Paul

3. . . . ***You have done me no wrong:*** I have no personal grievance with any of you in this matter of you reverting, I'm not striking back at anyone . . . [Merryman]

4. IN FACT: Paul pleads with them: do you remember how you first received me?

\* GALATIANS: GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO LEGALISM; RONALD C. MERRYMAN, DULUTH, MN, PG. 69



13. but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

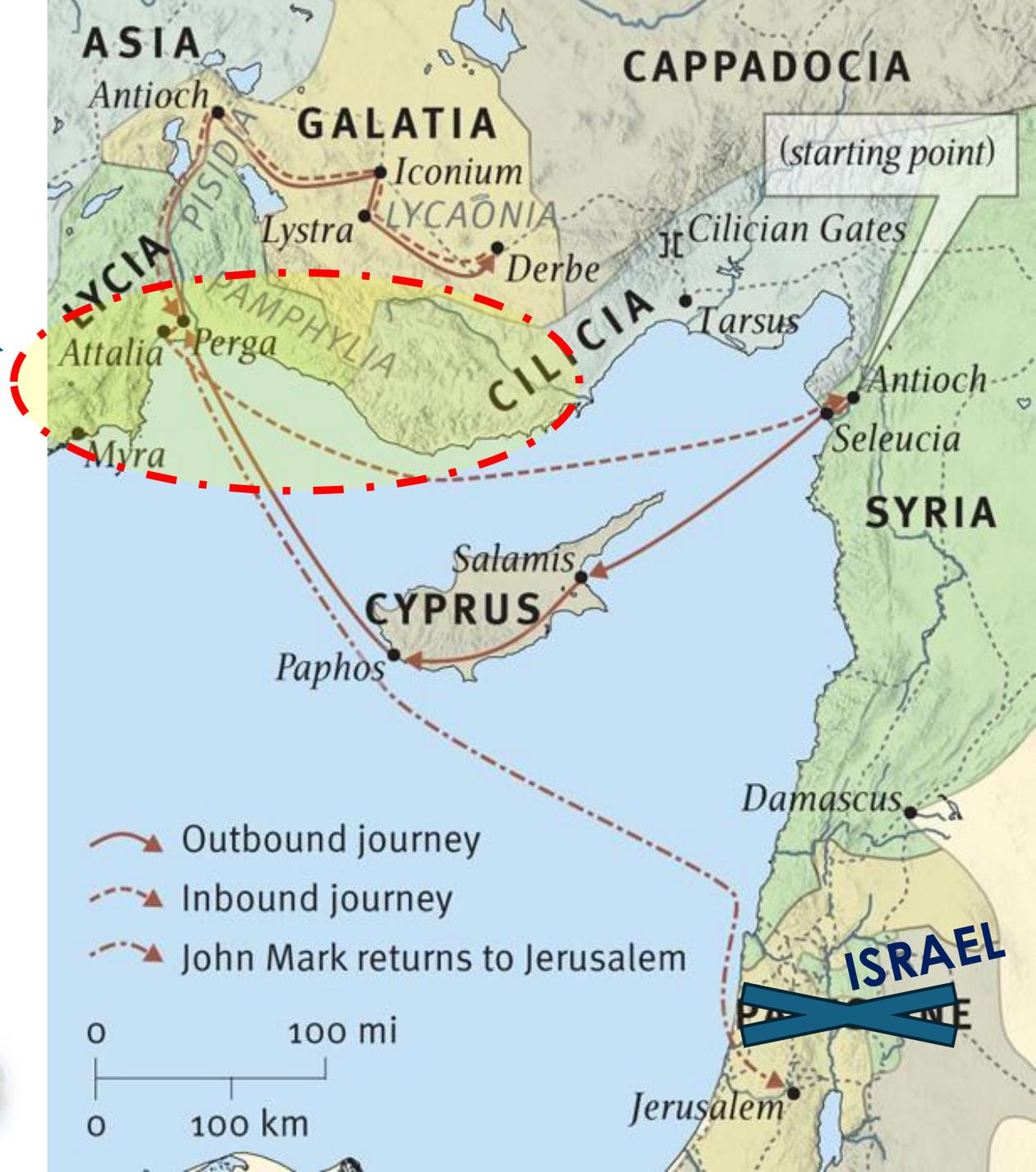


- I. From what bodily ailment did Paul suffer?
- II. Wuest: is adamant it is ophthalmia, common in the very place where his 1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey was, the lowlands, along the coast
- III. Paul, Barnabas & John Mark reach Perga, southern Asia along the coastline, and begin preaching in Asia Minor there, but they go north to Antioch (Pisidia), instead of hopping along the coastline.
- IV. One theory: is that people with ophthalmia recover at drier, northern climates away from the sea.
- V. Another piece of evidence Wuest and others give is:
  - (a.) Gal. 4:15 *'you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me'* [but some commentators say that was a common ancient Greek phrase] is evidence of the eye condition
  - (b.) Gal. 6:11: *'see what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand'* as evidence his eyesight is compromised
  - (c.) Gal. 4:14: Paul's repulsive appearance

13. but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

14. and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

**DANGER!**  
**Ophthalmia**  
**zone**



13. but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14. and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

What about Lystra?

He was stoned and left for dead there— [Acts 14]

That would have left a mark . . . .

What if he had open wounds, etc. that some in the city felt compassion for? And took it upon themselves to nurse him back to health?

Another thought on the Galatians strength in being caregivers:

- Perhaps the region was used to receiving the infirmed from the Pamphylia region from the south due to the eye condition: maybe they were the Saratoga Springs, NY of ancient Greece. . . .
- Caring for Paul was a **peirasmos** trial for the Galatians: a fiery trial, not a trial with view towards approval. Although, becoming believers, they turned it into a Godly-approved trial

14. and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

For whatever the reason, they nursed Paul back to health and were not revulsed by him.

### Interesting point of comparison:

Regarding: 'you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself':

#### Acts 14:

- At Lystra they healed a man lame since birth
- Paul heals him v. 10
- The peoples' reaction: "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."
- Paul & Barnabas react: *"Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM."*

VS.

The believing Galatians treat Paul and Barabas *not as gods (Zeus & Hermes)*

Acts 14:12

**But:**

**Correctly: they perceive they were sent as messengers (angels) of the One True God, and even Christ Himself**

So— Paul's question to them is 'where has this zeal gone'? Even when you were wrong about us as gods, you had zeal towards us.... Why were they pulled away now and being aloof to him and Barnabas?

## Why Turn Back? to:

- *Marking religious milestones: days, weeks, months, years*
- *Formalism*
- *Sacrifices*
- *Laws, codes of ethics*
- *Traditions*
- *Principles of religion, knowledge: “Wisdom”*
- *Food, drink & Festivals – (Col. 2)*
- *Self-abasement (Col. 2), etc.*
- *Worship of Angels*
- *Visions*
- *Decrees*

Doing so: you  
lose Christ—

Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, [Phil 3:8 ASV]

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees? *[or to the list on the left]?* [Col. 2:20]