

November 14, 2021

“Become Like Me”

*“Brethren I urge us to **become like me**, for I have become like you. You have not injured me at all” (Gal. 4:12).*

This article is entitled **“Become Like Me,”** and it is based on Paul’s letter to the saints at Galatia. In this epistle Paul specifically urged his brethren to *“become like me”* — that is, he exhorted them to *“become like”* himself! And we would state, by way of application, that we should also *“become like”* Paul in certain areas. However, before making personal application of Paul’s admonition to the brethren in Galatia, it is appropriate that we first bring the whole Galatian panorama into contextual focus.

The book of Galatians was written *“to the churches of Galatia”* (Gal. 1:2). Historians tell us that the Galatians tended to be fickle and easily swayed. And the book of Galatians seems to confirm this description of the Galatians. In fact, in Gal. 1:6 the apostle Paul said *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him Who called you in the grace of God, to a different gospel.”* Through the true gospel they had been *“called”* (2 Thess. 2:14), but now they were *“turning way from Him (from God!) Who had called them,* and Paul marveled that they were turning away *“so soon.”* From the context we discover that they had been led astray by certain Judaizing teachers who sought to impose upon these largely Gentile converts the tenets of the Mosaic Law. Hence, in Gal. 2:16 Paul thrice stated that *“a man is not justified by the works of the law.”* In chapter three Paul referred to God’s promise to Abraham, a promise which found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). However, between the giving of the promise (Gen. 12:1-3) and the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Law of Moses was given to the Jewish people — a law which was intended to serve as a *“tutor”* to bring them to Christ (Gal. 3:24). But once the system of *“faith”* (the Gospel which came through Jesus Christ) arrived, then they ceased being *“under a tutor”* (Gal. 3:25), or under the Mosaic Law. Much more could be said about the Gospel versus the Law distinction which is set forth in Galatians, but for now we would simply state that the burden of Gal. 3:1-4:31 is designed to prove that we must submit to Jesus Christ and His Gospel — not to Moses and the Law.

In the midst of his Law versus Gospel discussion Paul rebuked his Galatian brethren for observing *“days and months and seasons and years”* (Gal. 4:10). *“Days”* related to the Jewish Sabbaths, *“months”* had to do with the festivals of the new moon (Lev. 23:24), *“seasons”* included the stated seasons of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Lev. 25), and *“years”* included the sabbatical year, Jubilee, etc. (Lev. 24). All these items belonged to the Mosaic Law, which was no longer in effect, but which the brethren were continuing to observe. It is therefore little wonder that Paul then said *“I am afraid of you, lest I have labored for you in vain”* (Gal. 4:11)!

It was at this point (Gal. 4:12-18) that Paul, in an effort to appeal to the brethren at Galatia, reminded them of his own example in their midst. Paul, a Jew, would not *“compel Gentiles to live as Jews”* (Gal. 2:14), so he laid aside certain advantages he possessed as a Jew (cf. Phil. 3:4-7), and become *“like”* (Gal. 4:12) they were — become *“all things to all men”* in order to save some” (cf. I Cor. 9:19-22). Paul, a Jew, could function as though he were a Gentile.

Now in our text (Gal. 4:12) Paul urged his Galatian brethren to take the same stance toward the Law of Moses which he took toward them when he labored in their midst. Contextually speaking, it was in this sense that Paul said “*I urge you to become like me.*” Indeed, there are many arguments set forth in the book of Galatians which depict the folly of Christians reverting to Judaism. And all these “arguments” lead to one solemn conclusion; namely this: “*whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace*” (Gal. 5:4)!

Application:

We have given the contextual setting for Paul’s “*become like me*” admonition. However, this was not the only time he admonished brethren to follow his example. Perhaps the most familiar instance is I Cor. 11:1 in which he encouraged his brethren at Corinth to “*imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” When all is said and done, **example** (the proper example) is a powerful technique to teach and persuade others.

The books of the New Testament were not initially written to us, but by way of information and application, they were written **for** us. Hence, we should also “*become like*” Paul. But what would we do if we were “*like*” Paul? If we were “*like*” Paul we would:

1. Obey the truth regardless of the cost! Consider Paul’s past. He was “*circumcised the eighth day; of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee*” (Phil. 3:9). For him to become a Christian meant that he had to give up every earthly advantage for which he had so zealously labored, and even to be despised as a traitor, and hounded and hunted as a criminal worthy of death. Nevertheless in order to “*gain Christ*” he was willing to “*suffer the loss of all things*” and even count them “*as rubbish*” (Phil. 3:8). Who among us had to give up so much in order to become a Christian? And what “alien sinner” do we know that would have to give up so much to become a Christian? But in Christ Paul had found as it were that “*one pearl of great price*” (Matt. 13:14), so he gladly obeyed the gospel.

2. Follow through with a daily commitment to Christ and His truth. Paul was willing to forget “*those things which are behind,*” reach forth to “*those things which are ahead,*” and “*press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:13,14). Yes, in daily commitment, let us “*become like*” Paul!

3. Be actively involved in trying to win souls for Jesus! Recognizing that he was a “*debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise,*” Paul was always “*ready to preach the gospel*” (Rom. 1:14,15). He could say that “*my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved*” (Rom. 10:1). He was willing to “*spend and be spent*” in order to gain souls (2 Cor. 12:15), and suffer every imaginable hardship in his efforts to reach as many souls as possible. He did not quit the moment someone said “I am not interested!”

4. Be patient and content even in adversity (Phil.3:11-13). He did not give up *when the going got tough.* Have we “*become like*” Paul in this regard?

5. Be secure in our hope and confident of final victory (Gal. 6:9; Phil. 1:19; 2 Tim. 4:6-8. How confident are we of final victory?

Conclusion:

May each person who reads this article strive to “*become like*” Paul! The victory

“*crown*” (cf. Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:8) makes it more than worthwhile!

—B. Witherington