

# Galatians 4:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

## Analysis

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**I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.** Paul's pastoral anxiety. "I am afraid of you" (phoboumai hymas, φοβοῦμαι ὑμᾶς)—literally "I fear concerning you." Not fear of them but fear for them—alarm at their spiritual trajectory. "Lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (mē pōs eikē kekopiaka eis hymas)—that his missionary labors among them might prove fruitless. Kekopiaka (κεκοπίακα) is perfect tense, emphasizing the intensity and continuing effects of his past toil.

"In vain" (eikē, εἰκῇ) means without purpose, to no effect. Paul's fear isn't merely that they'd adopted wrong theology but that their defection indicated they'd never truly been saved. If justification is by faith plus law-keeping, then faith alone never saved them. Paul's apostolic anxiety reflected the stakes: this isn't minor error but potential apostasy. His love for them produced fear at their danger. True pastoral ministry involves both joy in believers' growth and appropriate fear when they drift toward destruction.

## Historical Context

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Paul's pattern was to establish churches, appoint elders, and move on (Acts 14:21-23). He trusted God and local leaders to maintain sound doctrine. The Galatians' rapid defection to a different gospel (1:6) within months or years of his departure caused deep alarm. His fear that his labor might be "in vain" echoed his concern for the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:5) and Philippians (Philippians

2:16). Apostolic ministry wasn't merely spreading ideas but birthing lasting spiritual life. False gospels threatened this.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. Does your spiritual state cause pastors, teachers, and mentors who invested in you appropriate concern or genuine joy?
2. How do you respond when spiritual leaders express alarm at your doctrinal drift or spiritual complacency?
3. What would it mean for teaching and ministry poured into you to be 'in vain' through your abandonment of sound doctrine?

## Interlinear Text

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φοβοῦμαι	ὑμᾶς	μήπως	εἰκῇ	κεκοπίακα	εἰς	ὑμᾶς
I am afraid	of you	lest	in vain	I have bestowed	upon	of you
G5399	G5209	G3381	G1500	G2872	G1519	G5209

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Thessalonians 3:5** (Parallel theme): For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

**Galatians 2:2** (Parallel theme): And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.