

Galatians 4: 19 and 20; “Until Christ is Formed in You”, Message # 27 in the series - “Christ Has Made Us Free”, A Bible Study conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall on the evening of July 23rd, 2014, at the church.

Paul is making an appeal to the Galatian churches to consider his spiritual labors in regard to them in the past. He was the one who had taught them the gospel and the way of salvation, through faith in Christ. He knew that the false teachers, those Judaizers among them, did not have this same care over them as he had exercised over their precious souls. He says that he is unsure of them, and he is about to change his tone with them. He is concerned that perhaps they have not understood the most basic principle of what it means to know the Lord. It is that a person has only been set free from the law's condemnation and being in bondage to it, when they have really believed with their whole heart in their need of Jesus Christ. Paul's uncertainty is whether or not these people in the Galatian churches had really come to know the Lord, and whether they know the difference between law and grace. One of the surest ways to come to know whether you are under law or whether you are under grace is to examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith; whether you have believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And just as important, whether you have a regenerate heart; whether Christ has been, and is being, formed in you, as our text says. This is what I want to speak to you about tonight.

1st of all – Paul wanted to show them that there is a childish stage in living your Christian life.
2nd – Paul wanted to remind them that he had labored over them as a mother giving birth to a child. May the Lord give us wisdom in understanding these truly spiritual things here tonight.

1st of all – Paul wanted to show them that there is a childish stage in living your Christian life.

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Paul specifically calls them children, even “his” children for whom he had labored in spiritual birth. The Apostle was laying claim to them as their spiritual father because he was the one who first came and preached the true gospel of Jesus Christ to them. And furthermore, he spoke this way because of the great love and holy affection that he had for them; just as a father would have. Turn over to 1st Corinthians 4: 9-17 with me. “For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.” “We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ!” “We are weak, but you are strong!” “You are distinguished, but we are dishonored!” “To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless.” “And we labor, working with our own hands.” “Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat.” “We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.” I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.” “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have any fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” Notice the language here; the appeal being made by Paul. He and the other Apostles were suffering reproach and persecution for the sake of the gospel of Christ; but the Corinthians were worldly wise enough to avoid it. They were distinguished; the Apostles were dishonored. But Paul reminds them that he was their spiritual father; one whom they ought to look up to, and learn from, the truth regarding the Christian life. They might have many instructors in Christ who might please them with how worldly wise a person could be and still be a Christian, but they did not have many like himself who could tell them how it really was if they were serious about glorifying God, and following Jesus Christ. He appeals to them as his children. He was not writing to shame them, but as his beloved children he needed to warn them.

Verses 17-20 say: "For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." "Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you." "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power." "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power." "What do you want?" "Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness." We need to always remember that there are men who are called to the Christian ministry, and there are others who are self-appointed, or appointed by false teachers. But the Apostles, even though hounded and persecuted, had the power of Christ with them. They were able to preach powerfully, even though weak in themselves and not as great in fleshly and man-taught oratory. Nevertheless God was with Paul to establish all of the truth of His word. The power of God as it is seen in the Christian minister is the power to declare and to hold fast the truth of His word, even to the point of having to suffer for it. Paul's way was teaching faith in Christ; faith to justify, and faith to pursue righteousness and holiness after conversion. The gospel coming to the Galatian churches came as the Apostle Paul travailed in laboring to preach to them the true gospel. The power that Paul had to be able to do this came to him because of Christ's going to the cross and purchasing it for him, and for all who will hold to the true and do the right. Christ had to suffer in order that the truth of what Paul preached could be established in the hearts of all those chosen by God.

Turn with me over to Isaiah 53: 10-12. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." "When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." "He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied." "By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." "Therefore He will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Christ shall see the labor of His soul, the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Christ was the eternal father of a vast multitude of people who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world, in order that they might be holy, and that they might inherit eternal life. He, because He was righteous, would justify the many elect of God; all those who would believe in Him for eternal life, because He would bear their iniquities. It was because He travailed in His soul that Paul was able to travail in his own soul for these Galatian churches which he had spiritually fathered in being the one who gave them the gospel and explained to them why they needed Christ's grace.

There is a childish state in living the Christian life. I want you to see how the Apostle John stated this in 1st John 2, verses 12-14. "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." "I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning." "I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one." "I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father." "I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning." "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." You can see the three distinctions made by John here; of children, of young men and of fathers in the faith. And, these distinctions are made based upon the level of spiritual understanding and experience of each. Children are those who do not know all that much of the Scripture yet. They have to be told the very basic truth that their sins are forgiven them for Christ's sake. But John also says that they have known the Father. They have known the Father's love and acceptance of them, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Young men are those who have overcome the wicked one. It says that they are strong in the grace of Christ, and that they are strong because the word of God abides in them. They have learned this very valuable

principle of how to overcome the schemes of the Devil answering his temptations with the truth of the Bible. Fathers are those who have both an experiential knowledge of Christ and salvation; they have known Him who is from the beginning, not they have just come to know Him. They are established in the faith and have passed many tests related to temptation, and are in the established habit of practicing righteousness and are going about to do good works.

Sometimes a growth problem develops in the life of a Christian. They remain babes in the faith longer than they should. Turn with me over to Hebrews Chapter 5, verses 12-14. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” You notice here that they ought to have been teachers, they had heard so much good preaching in the past, of Apostolic teaching, but they had come to need the milk of the word and not the meat, or the solid food. Why? Because they were still babes. And why were they still babes? They were unskilled in the word of righteousness. They had deliberately ignored their responsibility to pray over the Scripture that they had heard preached to them. They were in many respects hearers of the word and not doers of it. They had not taken heed to learn the intricacies of right and wrong. They had not grown in their ability to discern good from evil. They did not exercise their spiritual senses. They were lazy and worldly as regards applying themselves to learn sound doctrine and all the promises and precepts of the word of God. And so they could not grow up and become mature. This was their own fault. They needed to have respect for the dear father in the faith, Paul. And yet, sometimes children do not heed their parents in the way that they should.

So, 2ndly, Paul also wanted to remind them that he had labored over them as a mother giving birth to a child.

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Is Paul both a father and a mother to these Galatian churches? Yes, it appears that spiritually this was the case. But he was also a father and a mother to the church in Thessalonica. If you will turn over to 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2, verses 7-12. “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” “So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.” “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” This is what it means when Paul said that he needed to labor in birth again for those weak and erring believers in the Galatian churches. He needed to labor for them in preaching to them the truth of the word of God that salvation is by grace through faith and not of themselves; it was the gift of God. And he further needed to labor to show them by word and deed that they should walk worthy of this God who had called them into His own kingdom and glory. The beginning of Christ being formed in the believer is when they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit in relation to the preaching or sharing of the word of God concerning how sins are forgiven and righteousness is imputed.

But there are further steps in Christ being formed in you, and that is when Christ’s grace is imparted to your mind and heart so that you begin to see and you continue to see, that salvation is also grace imparted to change your heart. It is the Holy Spirit who brings about this radical change, whereby we die to sins and begin to live to righteousness. Turn with me over to 1st Peter 2: 21-25. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example,

that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sins, nor was deceit found in His mouth.; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.’ If there is no evidence of regeneration, the giving of New Life which raises the sinner from his death in sins to a new life of pursuing righteousness by faith in Christ, then that sinner does not yet know God. And he or she, may fool themselves as to whether they are really a Christian or not. But where there is grace imparted by God the Holy Spirit in the New Birth, then the believer begins to be conformed to the image of Christ. Christ is being formed in you, and will be formed in you until you see Him face to face.