

## Christ Formed In You

**Text:** Galatians 4.12–20

**Theme:** A pastor's chief concern should always be that Christ is formed in every believer

**Introduction — The passage before us this morning is Galatians 4.12–20**

- pew Bibles, page 1156–57

**Galatians 4:12-20 ESV**

12 Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.

13 You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, 14 and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.

15 What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

16 Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

18 It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

20 I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Now, let's pray as we wait upon the Lord

Over 30 years ago, Gatorade ran an advertising campaign using their premiere client, Michael Jordan

- Be like Mike was the slogan
- it featured children playing basketball and trying to be like Michael Jordan
- ah, if only it were so easy to just drink Gatorade and play like Jordan once did

And, wouldn't it be nearly the same if there were some drink to make you like Christ?

- you'd down it quickly and suddenly: Christlikeness!
- well, I'm sure Paul, had he known about Gatorade, would have wished for this about now
- the Galatians had tested his heart in their running back to the law
- they seemed on the verge of abandoning the gospel
- now, having scolded them about this, he shows something of his true heart for them
- let's listen in as we see that a pastor's chief concern should always be that Christ is formed in every believer

*First, we hear Paul say...*

### I. BE LIKE ME

- v. 12 begins with a change in tone
- Paul has been vehemently attacking the false teachers who have entered in
- he expresses his strong frustrations with the Galatian believers themselves
- but now, he is showing the pastor's heart that beats within him

### 1. I entreat you...

- NIV: I plead with you, brothers
- LSB: I beg of you
- KJV & NKJV: Brethren, I urge you
- many think of Paul as a harsh doctrinal expert sometimes
- all he cares about is getting the “I’s” crossed and the “I’s” dotted
- but nothing could be further from the truth
- he is now appealing to the tie of love in Christ that binds them together

### 2. Brothers

- Paul’s harsh tone earlier in this letter may have frightened some believers
- may have thought he was not just angry, but going to cut them off
- again, farthest thing from truth
- they are one in Christ, part of the body of Christ
- they share union in Christ
- they have all been covered by the same blood and work of Christ
- it’s as if he is saying: I’ve had to use some strong language to warn you of extreme danger
- but you are my brothers in Christ, we are adopted sons of God in this together

### 3. Become as I am...

- this will become something of a common theme for Paul
- he is not saying they should dress like him or take on his personality
- instead, he longs for them to have the same relationship to law & gospel that he does
- this is, after all, his main concern in this entire letter
- remember our song: Jesus’ sacrifice alone is sufficient to set us free from sin so we may live a life of obedience to God’s law by God’s grace.
- when Paul came to them, he too became like them
- this means, as a Jew, but one who had been set free in Christ from the law, he could be with Gentiles
- he could dress or eat with them and like them; he was free to do so
- he will address this issue with the Corinthian believers
- **19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.**

**1 Corinthians 9:19-20 ESV**

- this left Paul free to concentrate on the gospel, not external, irrelevant matters
- so, by this, he encourages them to move on from bondage to the law to their freedom in Christ
- in light of the false teachers, Paul is saying, “Don’t be like them, all bound up; be like me: free!”

*Next, we hear him extol...*

## II. THE LOVE OF CHRIST FOR ONE ANOTHER

- we now get to see a side of Paul most fail to see
- they focus on his doctrines and forget the difference those made within him
- they view him as the “take charge” church planter who gets things started and moves on quickly
- however, we, in taking this slow walk through the Galatian letter, get to see his heart

**1. You did me no wrong**

- some might object, saying they stoned him and left him for dead
- no, that was the Jews, the haters of the gospel message Paul preached
- those who had already believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ cared for Paul
- he was their spiritual father, if you will
- Paul had, indeed, experienced their love and high esteem

**2. A bodily ailment**

- Paul doesn't describe what physical issue he was dealing with
- many have speculated, but that isn't helpful here
- it may have been from the abuse he received at the hands of the Jews there
- it may have been an eye-related issue given what he says at the end of v. 15
- but that simply isn't clear
- what is clear is that these Galatians cared deeply for Paul
- v. 14 tells us of this: you did not scorn or despise me, but received me...
- now, don't get the idea they thought of Paul as an angel...he dissuaded them of that
- when he miraculously healed a lame man in Lystra, they called he & Barnabas gods
- he quickly dissuaded them of that as well
- however, it was the message of Christ to which they responded, not to him as a man
- it was Christ, the only begotten Son of God that they truly received
- but they held Paul in great esteem because of this message

**3. Something's off...what has become of your blessedness?**

- in his weakness, he preached with boldness and strength
- they were greatly blessed in receiving Christ, the object of that preaching
- they, in turn, loved Paul because of the gift he had brought to them
- we see this in v. 15
- again, this could be due to an eye ailment which Paul suffered from
- but it could as well be that the eye is the "window to the soul"—a tender part of you
- they were willing to take that precious part of them, gouge it out, for his sake
- but v. 16 tells us that there is trouble
- yes, we've got trouble, trouble right here in Galatian cities
- trouble that starts with "T" that rhymes with "P" that stands for "polluted gospel!"
- have I become your enemy?
- that's what the Judaizers have been saying
- "You don't want to listen to him. He tells you to throw off the law."
- "but you need the law; how will you know how to live a life that earns God's favor?"
- he says he's telling you the truth but is he? Is he really an apostle?"

*Third, we get a glimpse of...*

**III. A PASTOR'S HEART**

- here, Paul reminds them of his love for them
- a good pastor, a true shepherd of God's sheep not only feeds, he guards & warns
- there are wolves out there and they want to destroy and devour

**1. Real affection versus false affection**

- they make much of you, but for no good purpose, Paul writes
- the affection these false teachers had was false

- they make much of you, but they don't really care about you
- how does he know this?
- because they wish to shut you out
- shut you out...shut you out from what?
- these Judaizers, these false teachers want to cut you off, exclude you from the truth
- this is always the sign of a cult
- they can't stand to have you around others hearing the truth
- they can only have you listen to them
- these legalists wanted to isolate these Galatians believers from all other influences
- the mere thought that they should still listen to Paul made the legalists nearly sick
- but if they could isolate them, then they would only listen to them & their falsehoods

## 2. Made much of for a good purpose

- Paul doesn't deny that their high esteem and love is not a good thing
- it builds him up, it encourages him, it strengthens his ministry to and for them
- but what is the purpose of the false teachers?
- to shut Paul and the truth of the free grace of God in Christ out
- so, Paul says, it was good to be with you
- I experienced much love from you then
- but just because I can't be with you now does not diminish my affection for you
- nor should you turn from the truth and the message I preach
- don't go back, we heard two Sundays ago, in Galatians 4.8–11
- the Judaizers don't have the glory of God in mind; they only have their glory in their hearts
- so strong is Paul's love for these Christians, it hurts
- he saw spiritual birth take place and he worked hard in preaching the gospel to see that
- now, here he is again, laboring, like a woman giving birth, to make sure they don't forsake it
- what a heart for God's glory
- what a heart for Christ's great work
- what a heart for God's redeemed and adopted sons

*Finally, we hear Paul's great longing that...*

## IV. CHRIST FORMED IN YOU

- "my little children" Paul calls these brothers and sisters in Christ
- he was very much their spiritual father
- even when he writes to the Thessalonians some time later, he likens himself to their mothers
- but what brings this anguish to him?
- it's not just the threats and dangers they are under

### 1. Christ

- it's all about Christ; it's always been about Christ, ever since Acts 9, in Paul's life
- all he wants to do is "preach Christ and Him crucified"
- he simply wants to set Christ before people
- the law, good and holy as it is, cannot save
- it can only condemn and point to Christ
- but Christ! Christ can save, He can deliver, He can rescue, indeed
- this is the difference between Paul and the false teachers
- they wished to have people drawn to themselves and their teachings
- they wished to control and manipulate their hearers
- Paul wants only to point to Christ

- he longs and labors diligently to have them see Christ, the one who bore the curse for them

## 2. See them grow

- when each of our children were born, it was such a delight to see them grow
- oh, sure, there are the syrupy sappy sentimental thoughts: why do they have to grow up
- they're so doggone cute at this stage
- but all children are intended to grow, to mature, and to begin lives of their own
- this is Paul's longing, so much so, he wishes he could be back among them
- his tone would change, seeing them face-to-face again
- he would be a tender, gentle father with his children
- this is the heart of a pastor: to see his children grow in Christ Jesus

## Conclusion – Two applications come from this text

- one is for me, as your pastor
- the other is for you as the congregation

### First, to me as your pastor

- the pastor, like Paul here in Galatians, is merely a conduit
- a conduit for what? A conduit transmits something, but what?
- here it is Christ
- the confession reads: a pastor, the preacher is to preach faithfully, looking at the honor of Christ, the conversion, edification, and salvation of the people, not at his own glory or gain; keeping nothing back which may promote those holy ends, giving to every one his own portion, and bearing indifferent respect unto all, without neglecting the meanest, or sparing the greatest, in their sins
- the pastor always points to Christ and never to himself
- a pastor should never be seen as growing a kingdom for himself
- building a large church for his credit
- seeing a large following who cannot seem to live without him
- instead, I should preach Christ in such a way as to preach myself into obscurity
- my heart should be like that of John the Baptist: He must increase, but I must decrease

## The Valley of Vision book of prayers has an excellent prayer for the minister:

### My master God,

I am desired to preach today,

but go weak and needy to my task;

Yet I long that people might be edified with divine truth,

that an honest testimony might be borne of thee;

Give me assistance in preaching and prayer,

with heart uplifted for grace and unction.

Present to my view things pertinent to my subject,

with fullness of matter and clarity of thought,

proper expressions, fluency, fervency,

a feeling sense of the things I preach,

and grace to apply them to men's consciences.

Keep me conscious all the while of my defects

and let me not gloat in praise over my performance...

I myself need thy support, comfort, strength, holiness,

that I might be a pure channel of thy grace,

**and able to do something for thee;...  
keep me in tune with thee as I do this work.**

**So, the application of Galatians 4.12–20 to me is this:**

- to preach and to pray
- to preach Christ and to pray that you all see Christ
- to preach that Christ be real to every single one of you

**Oh that you who do not know Christ would come to Christ**

- it matters not what your sins may be, come to Christ
- it matters not if you're an adulterer, come to Christ
- it matters not if you're a liar, come to Christ
- it matters not if you're a moralistic, virtuous person, come to Christ
- it matters not you're political views, come to Christ
- no matter your past, your sin, your life now, come to Christ

**And to you who know Him, I long to see Christ formed in you**

- and so I pray to that end: that Christ is in you and you in Him
- that each of you who believe will see Christ formed in you
- that others will see you conformed to Christ
- that others will come to Christ because of the testimony of your words and life

**The second application is to you as the congregation**

- don't ever cease to be the loving, caring congregation of God's people that you are
- the love you show one another, the love you show to me...what a testimony it is
- God's glory shines all the brighter because of it
- don't let anyone persuade you otherwise, for the sake of Christ Jesus, who loves you
- as it pertains to me, like the Galatians to Paul, pray for me, love me, heed the gospel I preach
- pray that as you "make much of me" that this is due to the truth I proclaim, not me as a man
- pray that I never cease to love the gospel of Jesus Christ & preach it to you
- pray that any others who come and stand in this sacred desk do the same

**I don't want this to sound self-serving, but I cannot do this without you**

- oh, not for the obvious reasons that a pastor has to have a congregation
- but for the reason that I do not find myself anguishing as in a woman's labor pains because of you
- rather, you all make what I am called to do here such a joy
- and oh pray that always for me

**But pray it for each other as well**

- take your church directory and use it daily
- pray for those who do not know Christ (don't go looking for them specifically; just pray in general for any who do not)
- pray that when Christ is preached, they would see Him as so desirous that they come to Christ
- then pray for one another to have Christ formed in you and them daily
- pray that when any look at you they see Christ, they hear Christ

**My beloved people known as Albion Free Church...let Christ be formed in you!**