

Trinity Lutheran Church

Norman, Oklahoma – www.tlcnorman.org

The Book of Galatians

Theme: "The True Gospel You Have Received"

Date: 8-28-22

Lesson: 23 - Chapter 4:12-30

TEXT AND STUDY

(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 the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

(1 Sam 29:9; Mal 2:7; Mt 10:40; Ac 13:14-14:23; Rom 7:1;
1 Cor 2:3; 4:16; 11:1; 2 Cor 2:5; 5:20; 6:13; Php 3:17; 1 Th 1:6; 2:14; 3:12;
2 Th 3:7-9)

(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.

(Amos 5:10; Jn 13:33; Ac 20:37,38; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 4:16; Eph 4:13-15,24;
Php 4:1; Col 1:27; 3:10; 1 Th 2:7,8,11; 1 Jn 2:1; 3:7)

(21) Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? (22) For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. (23) But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. (24) Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. (25) Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

(Gen 16:1-16; 17:16-21; 18:10-14; 21:1-5; Ex 19:2; 20:1-17; Dt 33:2;
Rom 2:12; 8:15; 9:4,7,8; Heb 11:11)

(26) But **the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother**. (27) For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."

(Is 54:1; Php 3:20; Heb 12:22-24; Rev 3:12; 21:2,10)

(28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (29) But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to **the Spirit**, so also it is now. (30) But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." (31) So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.



(Gen 21:9,10,12; Ps 83:5,6; Jn 8:35;
Ac 13:50; 14:2-5,19; Rom 7:4; 1 Th 2:14-16; 1 Pet 3:6)

Luther's Commentary – Vol. 26

By “weakness of the flesh” Paul ... he means the suffering or affliction that he bore in his body, as contrasted with strength or power. But lest we appear to be doing injury to these words, let us listen to Paul himself. In 2 Cor. 12:9–10 he says: “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that **the power of Christ** may rest upon me. For **the sake of Christ**, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.” And in chapter eleven (vv. 23–25) he writes: “With far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.

Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked, etc.” These sufferings, which he bore in his body, are what he calls “weakness of the flesh,” not the poor health of his body. It is as though he were to say: “When I preached **the Gospel** among you, I was overwhelmed by various afflictions and troubles. From every side I was threatened by the plots and attacks of Jews, Gentiles, and false brethren. I was troubled by hunger and by a lack of everything. I was the κάθαρμα of the world and the περίφημα of all things (1 Cor. 4:13).” He mentions this weakness of his frequently, as in 1 Cor. 4; in 2 Cor. 4; 6; 11; 12; and elsewhere.

Therefore it is clear enough that Paul calls “weaknesses of the flesh” the afflictions that not only he but the other apostles suffered. Although they were weak in the flesh, they were strong in spirit; for **the power of Christ** dwelt in them, and it continually ruled and triumphed through them. Paul himself testifies to this in 2 Cor. 12:10 in the words: “When I am weak, then I am strong”; again (v. 9): “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that **the power of Christ** may rest upon me”; and in chapter two (v. 14) he says: “Thanks be to **God, who in Christ** always leads us in triumph.”

It is as though he were saying: “Regardless of how cruelly the devil, the unbelieving Jews, and the heathen rage against us, we continue unconquered by all their insults. Whether they like it or not, our doctrine prevails and triumphs.” Such was the power and courage of the spirit in the apostles, with which he here contrasts the weakness and slavery of their flesh.

“The apostles—like all teachers, though in a special way—acted in the place of parents; just as the latter give birth to the form of the body, so the former to the form of the mind. Now the form of the Christian mind is faith, the trust of the heart, which takes hold **of Christ**, clings only to Him and to nothing else besides. A heart that is equipped with such confidence has **the true form of Christ**, which is provided by the ministry of **the Word**. 1 Cor. 4:15: “I became your father through the **Gospel**,” namely, **in the Spirit**, so that you might know **Christ** and believe in Him; 2 Cor. 3:3: “You are a letter **from Christ** delivered by us, written not with ink but **with the Spirit of the living God**.”

For **the Word** proceeds from the mouth of the apostle and reaches the heart of the hearer; there **the Holy Spirit** is present and impresses **that Word** on the heart, so that it is heard. In this way every preacher is a parent, who produces and forms the true shape of the Christian mind through **the ministry of the Word**.

LIFE APPLICATION

“My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until **Christ** is formed in you!”

How is it that **Christ** is formed in us?

