

Trinity Lutheran Church

Norman, Oklahoma – www.tlcnorman.org

The Book of Galatians

Theme: “The True Gospel You Have Received”

Date: 9-4-22

Lesson: 24 - Chapter 4:16-30



TEXT AND STUDY

(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

This also belongs to the rhetoric by which Paul punishes the spirit of the Galatians with gentle and soothing words; endearingly he calls them his little children. All the words are chosen to appeal to the emotions and gain favor.

“With whom I am again in travail.” This is an allegory. 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**.

At the same time Paul attacks the false apostles in passing, as though he were to say: “Through the Gospel I truly became your father. But those corrupters and distorters came and established a new image in your heart, not that of **Christ** but that of Moses, so that your confidence no longer rests on **Christ** but on the works of the Law. This is an alien and completely diabolical form, not **the true form or the form of Christ**.”

Paul does not say: “I am again in travail with you until my form be formed in you.” No, he says: “**until Christ be formed in you**.” That is: “I am laboring in order that you may acquire the form and **likeness of Christ** again, not that of Paul.” With these words he rebukes the false apostles again; for they abolished **the form of Christ** in the minds of the believers and made up another form, namely, their own. “They desire to have you circumcised,” he says in Gal. 6:13, “that they may glory in your flesh.”

The apostle also speaks of **this form of Christ** in Col. 3:10: “Put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of **its Creator**.” Therefore Paul wants to restore **the image of God or of Christ** in the Galatians. It had been deformed or distorted by the false apostles, and it consists in this, that they feel, think, and want exactly **what God does**, whose thought and will it is that **we obtain the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ, His Son, whom He sent into the world to be the expiation for our sins and for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2), so that through the Son we might acknowledge Him as our Father, who has been placated and is kindly disposed toward us.**

Those who believe this are **like God**; that is, they think **of God** altogether as He feels in His heart, and they have the same form in **their mind that God or Christ has**. This, according to Paul, is to “be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new nature, created after **the likeness of God**” (Eph. 4:23–24).

Therefore Paul says that he is in travail again with the Galatians, but in such a way that the form of the children is not the form of the apostle and that the sons do not bear the image of Paul or of Cephas (1 Cor. 1:12) but that of another father, namely, **Christ**. “**He is the One**,” he says, “whom I want to form in you, so that in everything you feel as **Christ Himself** feels. In short, I am in travail with you; that is, I am laboring anxiously again to call you back to your original faith, which you lost when you were deceived by the cleverness of the false apostles and fell back into the Law and works. Therefore a new and difficult labor has been laid upon me, to lead you back from the Law **to faith in Christ**.” This is what he calls “being in travail.”

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?