

Paul's Pastoral Appeal
Galatians 4:8-20
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Galatians 3 and 4 are doctrinal sections of the book of Galatians after Galatians 1 and 2 are personal. In Galatians 3 and 4, Paul is basically giving us a series of arguments—very, very simple, and it's the heart of the book of Galatians—to show us that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That was the cry of the Protestant Reformation. The doctrine of justification by faith had been lost, and God used certain men to bring it back into the focus. It's the doctrine that is clearly taught in the Scripture, and it's the basis of our Christian faith that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and that the only way to be saved is by trusting Jesus—faith in Jesus Christ. No one can get to heaven by their good works or deeds, and no other religious system, rites, or rituals can justify you to make you righteous before God or get you a place in heaven. There's only one way to be saved, and that's through Jesus Christ. The only way that He saves us is when we trust Him, who has done the finished work for our salvation on the cross. Amen?

We continue tonight with a series of arguments, and I've packaged them into three arguments that Paul has given to the people in Galatia who were in danger of backsliding into Judaism. Now, the reason he is arguing with them is that false teachers, and believe me there are false teachers even still today, had come into the churches of Galatia, which is modern day Turkey where Paul had started these groups of churches, telling the Gentile Christians, "You can't be saved unless you become Jews. You can't be a Christian unless you become Jews," so they were what's called Judaizers. They were Judaizing these Gentiles. They were telling these Gentiles that in order to become a Jew you have to have the rite of circumcision, then you have to keep the Mosaic law, you have to worship on the sabbath day, follow dietary laws and all the rites and rituals of the Jewish religion in order to be saved. They were trying to bring these people back from Christ to the Old Testament, to the old covenant law.

There are a lot of Christians today, it's become a fashionable kind of trend, that having come to Christ try to become more spiritual by being more Jewish in their relationship to Christ. I can understand that they want to value and appreciate their Jewish heritage, and we sometimes refer to Christianity as "Judeo-Christian faith," but Judaism without Christ is no different than any other false religion. Judaism without Christ is a false religious system. Only Jesus Christ can bring us to heaven, and so many times Christians think, Well, I'll be more spiritual if I wear this robe, or I'll be more spiritual if I cut my hair in a super Christian way, or If I wear Christian clothes, or If I do certain Christian things, or I worship on a special day, yeah, that's the day; if I worship on that day, that'll get me into heaven, and If I do this rite or ritual, or If I take communion every day, or If I read my Bible a whole bunch, it'll get me to heaven.

Those are all things that are okay, but none of those can earn, merit, or deserve salvation. Salvation is a gift from God, Ephesians 2:8-9. Every Christian should memorize it, right? "For by grace are ye saved...and that not of yourselves," when he says, "...and that not of

yourselves,” that is the salvation, “For by grace are ye saved...and that not of yourselves: it is,” your salvation, “the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” He goes on in the next verse to say, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,” and we’re going to get that in Galatians 5 and 6, not being under the law, being free from the law. It doesn’t mean we’re free to sin. We’re not talking about license. We’re not talking about legalism. We’re talking about liberty. The extremes are that you can become very legalistic or you can be very licentious and what’s called the Libertines, “We can do whatever we want. We’re saved by grace. We can live however we want,” but in the salvation of the soul and in the sanctification of the life, it all happens through grace, by faith, and relying upon the Holy Spirit.

I want to back up and get a running start on verse 8. Last week we closed in Galatians 4:1-7. I want to remind you of what we covered and tie it into the rest of the chapter. If you’re taking notes, write this down. In verses 1-11 we have Paul’s dispensational argument. Forgive me for that big word, “dispensational.” It means that there is the old covenant and the new covenant, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the old system under law and the new system that is under grace. In John’s gospel, he said, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Paul starts talking about our condition under the law in the old dispensation, verses 1-3. He says, “Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant,” or a slave, “though he be lord of all.” He’s giving this analogy that a child born into a wealthy household and is heir of all the inheritance that’s there, as long as he is under age and a child, he doesn’t really differ any from a slave. He’s still under governors and tutors as the Scripture says (verse 2), “But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed,” notice that phrase, “until the time appointed.”

There’s the old dispensation and then the new will come in at the appointed time when Messiah comes or “God sent forth His Son,” in verse 4. It says, “...until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” Basically he’s saying that like a child born into a wealthy household, until he reaches the age of being an adult and can enjoy his inheritance, he’s really under the tutorage and the discipline of that household and is not free. When you’re young, “Be home at a certain time,” you can’t eat certain foods, you gotta go to bed, and people tell you what to do. Then, you get old and have more independence and do what you want to. You’re of legal age and can drive a car, take your inheritance, and do certain things. He’s drawing that analogy between the old dispensation under law—it was like that we were still no different than a slave or a servant even though we were sons.

Paul gives another picture of what happened when God sent His Son. In verses 1-3, we have man’s condition under the law, we were infants living in bondage under the law before Christ, and in verses 4-7 we have God’s action through Christ. It wasn’t what we did or what we can do, it’s what God did. All through the Scriptures, as it is in this passage, God takes the initiative. Notice what God did. Verse 4 says, “But when the fulness of the time was come,” this is what God did, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,” that is, His Son was made of a woman,”made under the law,” and the purpose for which He came, verse 5, “To redeem them

that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons," under this new fullness of time, this new dispensation, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant," which he talked about in verses 1-3, "but a son," that is, a full legal adult son, "and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." These are marvelous marvelous marvelous truths!

Paul basically says, "Under the old dispensation, you were no different than a slave or a servant." You couldn't enjoy your inheritance, but now since the fullness of time when God sent forth His Son, this is what God did, "God sent forth his Son," and we pointed out last week that that speaks of Christ's deity, God sending His Son. It also indicates, and I didn't mention it last week, that Christ pre-existed. If God sent forth His Son, then He was in heaven before He was born in Bethlehem. The Bible actually teaches that Christ is eternal and pre-existent, that He was in existence before Bethlehem, and that He is God. Then, He became Man, "made of a woman," this speaks of His incarnation or His humanity. He was "made under the law," that is, the Jewish law. He became a Jew through the womb of the virgin Mary. He was born under the law, lived perfectly the law, and then died a substitutionary death to pay the penalty of the law and to satisfy the law. The reason Jesus came was to redeem us.

Everything Paul is saying, verses 4-7, is basically the law cannot do this. There's no ritual, rite, or religious deed or works of the flesh that can accomplish this. You can't get redeemed by the works of the flesh. It's just not going to happen. He came to buy us, to redeem us that were under the law, that we might be adopted as sons. We talked about adoption and what that means.

It's interesting. I did a little more study this week. I go home on Wednesday nights...actually this is a little side note. I shouldn't do this, but I go home and re-study what I just preached. I'm thinking, Did I miss something? Do I really know what I'm talking about? Did I mess this up? I shouldn't do that. I should go to bed, but I stay up late studying what I just preached. I looked a little more into adoption, and it's something I knew but have kind of forgotten that adoption is not Hebrew in its background. The Jews didn't have any laws or rules, and weren't really big on adoption, though they did that; but the concept of adoption, only mentioned in the New Testament by Paul the Apostle, is Greco-Roman.

If you really want to blow your mind, do some research about adoption in the Greco-Roman culture. It was absolutely amazing. I found this out. First, it was primary adult males. Unlike our adoption, where we adopt babies and prefer to have babies and do it for mercy purposes because we have pity on the child, adoption in the Greco-Roman world was rich, wealthy landowners, many times people who were leaders. Nine of the Caesars were adopted and became Caesar of Rome. Actually, very wealthy people, if they didn't have a worthy son to give their estate to, would adopt a slave or someone from a poor family, legally bring them into the family, they would be in line to inherit all that wealth, and become the next father who would rule over them. Even the biological children could not contest or complain about that. You may have sons that were born biologically to you; but if they weren't fit to take over your inheritance, then you would adopt maybe a trustworthy slave or somebody from a poor family. It was

primarily males. It was done to become heirs and to be the head of the family.

I'm not promoting this, but they didn't really want to adopt females. They wanted to adopt males for the sake of giving them the inheritance and making them head of their family and of their estate. They would have a new father, they wouldn't have their old biological father; and if they had a debt, it was cancelled. They would then be purchased. There was a price that had to be paid to purchase them. The thing that really blessed me was that this adoption was formal, legal, there had to be witnesses of this adoption (actually seven witnesses), and it was absolutely binding and irrevocable. You couldn't reverse it. When the Bible says, "We are adopted," it's interesting. We are born into God's family through regeneration, that's our rebirth. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again," but we're also adopted as sons into God's family which means we're given a legal adult standing so that we can enjoy and inherit all of the blessings that are ours—we get a new Father, and it's a permanent position that cannot be contested, violated, or broken. I think it speaks of what the New Testament teaches; that is, the security of the believer—we've been sealed by the Holy Spirit and adopted into God's family and nothing can "...separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Notice an expression that I think is kind of cool in verse 4, "...God sent forth His Son," and in verse 6, "God hath sent forth the Spirit." The first thing God does is send His Son into the world. The second thing God does is send His Spirit into our hearts. God sends His Son into the world to redeem us so that we can become His children. Then, He sends His Spirit into our hearts so that we can enjoy our relationship and experience the joy of being a child of God. It also mentions that we are heirs of God. We've been redeemed and adopted, verse 5; we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts, verse 6; then, we are made heirs of God through Christ, so we are going to inherit all things.

Just this little list that you get right here are all the blessings for every believer, not just the super saints or the "Deeper Life Club" (which doesn't exist, I'm only joking), but every Christian possesses these things. You've been redeemed, adopted, indwelt, and you're an heir of God in Christ. That should make your heart rejoice, right? Here's the theological argument: Why would you want to go back to the weak and beggarly elements? Why would you want to go back to rites, rituals, holy days, new moons and sabbaths, and all of these things? Those are the elementary things. Those are the things that were preparatory to bring us to Christ. Why would you want to go back? You're not progressing or growing, it's regressing. You're not growing in the Lord, you're falling away from the grace of Christ back into legalism which is immaturity.

A lot of times Christians like to become legalistic because it gives them a standard, a self manmade standard, by which they can judge that they are spiritual, "Well, I do this and I do that. Don't you wish you were like me and did as much as I did?" The idea that we're just saved by grace is just too humbling to their hearts. They can't accept that. Religion feeds the flesh and the prideful heart of man, but salvation by grace humbles the proud-hearted man—nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling. Amen? I come naked and must accept Christ's righteousness given to me by faith. We become sons of God. We are His heirs through Christ.

Verse 4, "...God sent forth his Son," into the world, and then "...sent forth the Spirit...into your hearts."

Remember when Jesus told the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15? The son went away from the father, and, a long story short, he came back. When he came back to the father he said, "Father, I'm no longer worthy to be called thy son. Can I just be made one of your hired servants?" The father said, "No, no, no, no. We're not gonna go there," that's paraphrased. He said, "Bring the new robe, and put it on him. Put the ring of sonship on his finger. Put shoes on his feet, and kill the fatted calf. We're going to have a party. My son, which was lost, has been found, and who was dead is alive again." He wouldn't allow him to come back as a slave, but he did bring him back as a son. What a beautiful picture that is of what God has done for us in Christ.

Moving into our text tonight, verses 8-11, we see Paul's appeal. Even though we're in the doctrinal section, there's some very touching, very personal arguments that Paul gives to the Galatians in these next several verses. Verses 8-11 are based on a contrast of their old life before Christ with their new life they have now in Christ. He says, verse 8, "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God," he's reminding these Gentile Galatian believers that in their old life they didn't know God. They didn't have a relationship under God under the old covenant or under law. "...ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." He's speaking of the pagan idols which they bowed down to and worshiped. He says, "But now, after that," after you were living in darkness and worshiping false gods, "ye have known God, or rather are known of God," fascinating statement that now, in Christ, you do know God and are known of God. We'll come back to that. He says, "So, here's the problem, 'how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?'" Notice the question mark there. He's basically saying, "You know, you came out of paganism. You were worshiping these idols which are no gods. You were living in bondage and darkness. You came to Christ. You were set free. You knew God, God knew you. You had a relationship with God. Why would you want to go back to these things?"

By the way, the whole book of Hebrews is written to Hebrews to tell them to stop being Hebrews. That's what it's doing. He's written to Jewish Christians who wanted to go back to Judaism instead of going on with Christ. He's telling them, "You don't want to go back to these 'weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage,'" that's referring to the law, to their paganism, to the old life before they came to know Christ.

Go back to verse 8 for a minute. Paul says, "...when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." Everyone has a god. Everyone serves a god, and if it's not the true and living God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Bible, it's not God. There aren't multiple gods. There aren't many gods. There aren't different gods for different religions. There's only one God, and that one God can only be known through His Son Jesus Christ.

In the book of Hebrews, it says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners," different

times and different ways, “spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,” that word “by” can mean, in, by, or through, “his Son.” God is speaking in His Son; and if you won’t listen, you won’t hear God. If you don’t come to Christ, you can’t come to God.

In John 17, in Christ’s high priestly prayer, Jesus actually said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.” You can’t know God apart from Jesus Christ. This idea that if a person’s in a false religious system, if he’s really sincere and really earnest, that he knows God in his own way, is not biblical. It’s not scriptural. If you don’t have Jesus Christ, then you don’t have the Jesus of the Bible, and you haven’t repented and trusted Him as your Savior, then you do not have God. It’s that simple. I quoted it, I believe it was Sunday morning, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He didn’t say, “...and Buddha,” or “Confucius,” or “Muhammad,” or “by Joseph Smith.” He says, “...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He is the way, the truth, and the life. Only Jesus can get us to the Father. The false religions of the world, which are indeed that (listen to my message from last Sunday in Revelation 17), are false religions and have not the real and true God. They were living in bondage.

Verse 9, “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.” Here’s Christianity: It’s knowing God, and God knowing you. You say, “Well, naturally God knows us. He’s omniscient. He knows everything.” In the New Testament, when the Bible says for believers that God knows them, it’s actually used as a figure of speech for knowing intimately in an intimate relationship. It’s the same concept of a husband knew his wife or that Adam knew his wife. It means an intimate relationship. When God knows us, He knows us intimately. We have a relationship with Him, and the Bible talks about Him foreknowing us and calling us. It means that He sets His love upon us. It’s not just that I know Him, but He actually knows me and sets His love upon me. Again, it would indicate the saving grace of God in electing us, calling us, and drawing us to Himself. So, “how,” after all that, verse 9, “turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements.”

What are the “weak and beggarly elements?” Well, they cannot save. They just lead to bondage. Here they are in verse 10, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.” This is Jewish ceremonial law—sabbath days, sabbath months, sabbath seasons or times of festivals, seasons, and years. None of them can produce either salvation or sanctification, yet again I see Christians today trying to be more Jewish in order to be more spiritual. It’s not going to make you any more spiritual. You’re no more spiritual than if you wear a religious robe or if you wear religious trinkets around your neck. I’m not saying don’t do that, but it doesn’t make you more spiritual. It just makes you more relying upon those ceremonial things rather than accepting what Christ has done for you on the cross. Don’t go back to worrying about days. Let’s not quibble over the day that we worship or religious months or times or years or special holy days.

Now, this doesn’t mean you can’t rightfully, with the right motive and purpose, celebrate Christmas or Easter or these kind of religious days acknowledging them, but that’s not

something that's going to make you more spiritual. It's not going to make you more sanctified. That's why Paul says, verse 11, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain," I'm worried about you, that you are going back to these legalistic rites and rituals. Even Paul the Apostle, who was a very strict Pharisee, and we're going to talk about that in a moment, didn't go back to these things.

In verses 12-20 we have the second main arguments of Paul. They are sentimental arguments. The first are dispensational; the second ones are sentimental. As a pastor, I find these really intriguing. I think that we should all have, in a sense of a pastoral heart, a care for other believers. Paul is the pastor of those that were there in Galatia. He kind of appeals to them in a very personal, sentimental, emotional way. His appeal is in verse 12. "Brethren," the fact that he calls them brethren indicates that even these foolish Galatians who were in danger of going back into legalism and who were being bewitched by the false teachers, were indeed true believers. He said, "I beseech you," I beg you, "be as I am; for I am as ye are," you're without the law; I'm without the law. You were Gentiles, and now you've become Christians. Don't go back to trying to be Jewish. I was Jewish, and now I'm living like you. Be as I am. Don't go back under the law. "...ye have not injured me at all," or wronged me. He speaks of their attitude toward Paul.

Paul was the one who led them to Christ. He was their spiritual father, and he also was the one who mentored and discipled them. He says, verse 13, "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me," that is, when he came to them, "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus," or as His representative or His true apostle. Verse 15, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" Where's the love that you used to have for me? "for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" Isn't that bizarre? He leads them to Christ. He's their spiritual father. He uses an expression, in just a moment, that actually images of being their spiritual mother. He says, "I'm in labor pains for you, until Christ be formed in you." He had this spiritual ministry in their lives, and now they're following the false teachers and turning their back on Paul the Apostle not listening to him. It's kind of so typical of what can happen quite often in the church.

Notice that Paul says, verse 13, "Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh," and then talks about in verse 14, "And my temptation which was in my flesh." I don't think there is any doubt but that Paul is referring to some physical weakness, affliction, or ailment. This is an interesting passage that the positive confession word faith teachers seem to avoid—the idea that Paul the Apostle had an infirmity in his flesh. They would actually label this as a "negative confession," "Don't say it, Paul, or you'll have it." Paul is just sharing a reality.

Being a child of God does not guarantee that you will have wealth and health. Can I get an amen? Any preacher that tries to sell you that is giving you unbiblical lies and not the truth of Scripture. I'm being very kind about that teaching. It's not biblical. No one is going to have perfect health until you get out of this body and you go to heaven, until you have the third stage

of your salvation, which is glorification. If you're a Christian, and the Lord tarries, you'll get older and you'll get weaker, and you'll get older and get weaker, and you'll get sick, and then you get super sick, and then you might get sick again, and then you might die. But guess what? "...to be absent from the body," is to be "...present with the Lord." Amen? That's why the older you get, the closer you are to home, the closer you are to seeing Jesus Christ. How marvelous that is!

Paul says, "I preached when I got to Galatia, and I had an infirmity in my flesh." I would like it if Paul would have told us what it was, but he didn't. He did mention a "thorn in his flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12, which I happen to believe, based on this passage and the passage in 2 Corinthians 12, was a physical infirmity or affliction. In 2 Corinthians 12, do you know why God gave him the thorn? I don't know what the thorn was. I read one commentary that said it was his wife. I don't think that's the case. "Just my thorn in my flesh!" No, no, no, no. If any of you guys are claiming that tonight, you're out of bounds. Whatever it was, we don't know. I do know that Paul said, "There was given to me," underline that phrase in 2 Corinthians 12 and then ask this question: Who gave it to him? I'll give you the answer. God allowed Satan to afflict him.

Remember last Sunday (I think it was, I'm preaching so much I don't know where I am or who I am) I was preaching about Martin Luther's quote, "Even the devil is God's devil," and that God would use the Antichrist to judge the harlot, so God uses an evil to destroy an evil. God will allow the devil to afflict His child, but it will then serve His purpose. Maybe Satan might give you a sickness, but he has to come through God. He has to be filtered through God. No one or nothing can touch you but what they get permission from God. As a Christian, I know it doesn't always make it easy, nothing can happen to you but what God allows. God is in control. That is kind of a gray area when it comes to you being rebellious and out of the will of God, but God will use even discipline there to bring you back into His will. If something bad happens to you, and you're His child, it's from the loving hand of a loving Father who wants to humble you and bring you back on the path.

Paul says, "...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me," and then he tells us why, "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations," because God had taken him to heaven and he'd seen these beautiful things in heaven. God didn't want Paul to be lifted up with pride so gave him a thorn to keep him humble and keep him dependent and, thus, keep him usable. You know, if you're being used of God and you get proud, you're not usable anymore. God uses the humble. God uses the broken. God uses the weak. If God is going to keep using you, He has to break you. He has to humble you. It might be even right now you're going through things in your own life that are a breaking, a humbling, and instead of resisting, running from it, or getting mad at God, just yield to it. Just surrender to Him. Say, "God, have Your way. Teach me what You want me to learn. Help me to have wisdom to know what You're trying to teach me. Help me to be usable." Paul had this thorn in his flesh.

One guess is, because later on in this passage in verse 15, Paul says, "for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to

me.” A lot of Bible students think, we don’t know for sure, that Paul had bad eyes, that he had some kind of an eye disease. Some say it may be epilepsy or malaria, we don’t really know, but this verse is kind of interesting. Why would he say, “ye would have plucked out your own eyes?” It could be that he had bad eyes or it could be that it was a figure of speech like, “I’d give you my right arm,” or “I’d give you my right hand,” and they would use, “I’d give you my own eyes.” Paul is actually basically saying, “You loved me, and your attitude was that of appreciation. Why are you following these false teachers and turning away from me?”

Paul goes on to say, verse 16, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” Isn’t it interesting that when you tell somebody the truth, which the Bible says in Proverbs 27:6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,” when he tells you the truth, that people will turn against you? Paul then speaks of his attitude toward them. This is quite touching, verse 17, “They,” the false teachers, “zealously affect you, but not well,” what he means by that is they are flattering you telling you what will feed your flesh, and they are doing damage to you. “...yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.” In other words, they are basically drawing you after themselves for their own selfish purposes and reasons. They don’t have the Galatians’ best interests in mind. They are doing it for selfish reasons.

Many times false teachers will do this today. They won’t go out and evangelize and win people to Christ on their own, they go to an established church and feed on believers trying to draw them after themselves. Instead of pointing them to Jesus, they draw people after themselves. They’re basically using them for their own gain. These false teachers used flattery to win them to themselves.

Verse 18, Paul says, “But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.” It’s good that you showed me love not just when I’m with you. He then uses this endearing term. He says, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,” that’s the concept of Paul, and this is kind of crazy, but Paul is using the analogy of a woman in labor. Paul was not a woman, but he’s using it kind of metaphorically. He says, “I feel like I’m having birth pains and having to rebirth you again,” and he says, “...until Christ be formed in you. 20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.” Paul actually says, “You are my little children. I led you to Christ. Now, as your spiritual leader, like a mother who is in labor, I’m desiring for Christ to be formed in you,” or developed in you.

We actually see here a couple of things. We see a pastor’s heart which has as its primary goal, Christ formed in the life of the believer. A pastor’s job is that those under his care are to bring them to Christ, to mature them in Christ, and for Christ to be formed in them. A classic cross reference is Ephesians 4:13-15. Any pastor would do well to make this a pattern of his ministry; that is, in Ephesians 4:11 where he says, “And he gave some,” listen to me very carefully. This is one of my philosophies of ministry, “...pastors and teachers,” it’s one word in the Greek. It’s hyphenated. It’s not just pastor, and then over here is a teacher, but a pastor-teacher. A true pastor has to be a teacher, and what they teach is the Word of God, not philosophies, not

psychology, but God's Word. "And he gave some...pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints." That word "perfecting" means to mature them, to grow them, not to entertain or razzmatazz or impress or to give them goosebumps and excited and make them cry and clap and all emotional or jump up and down, "Wow! I really got the congregation hyped," but to bring them to spiritual maturity.

Do you know a lot of Christians have kind of a Christian Peter Pan mentality—they want to stay in Never Never Land, spiritual babes. They don't want to grow because it's hard to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. You'd have to be suffering, tried, tested, go through difficulties, and experience persecution to be maturing. A pastor's job, this is one of the jobs of a pastor, is to teach God's Word so that the people of God will grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and come to maturity—to be grown up, to come out of being an infant and grow up. They don't want to go back to legalism, they want to be growing in the liberty that is in Christ, "...until Christ be formed in you."

In Ephesians 4, Paul goes on to say, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ," of the body. My job is to teach God's Word to bring God's people to spiritual maturity for them to be actively involved and doing the work of ministry. That's a pastor's heart, and we see that in verse 19, "...I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

I had every intention and every plan to finish this whole chapter, but we're not going to. Some of you are going, "Oh, praise God from Whom all blessing flow!" I want you to read the rest of the chapter because it's amazing allegorical argument where he takes Abraham and Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, and Isaac and says they're an allegory of the old covenant and the new covenant. That's where we get the title: Who's Your Mother? Is it Hagar or Sarah, and it would have wrapped up our time together in God's Word tonight. We'll stop right here. Amen? Okay, let's pray.