

LSB Galatians 4:19 - 20 **Christ Formed In You**

19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you— 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.

This morning we're going to look at just 2 verses in Galatians chapter 4. Vss. 19 and 20. But this will be more like a topical bible study than a simple exposition of the mechanics and words of those verses. We will do that also of course, but verse 19 is a wonderful wording of the doctrine of christian sanctification. Christ formed in you.

We can easily arrive at what Paul is saying here. But we need to spend some time here studying and thinking about the deeper theme of these verses. Actually just verse 19. Simple words. Simple idea. But depth that quite literally requires a lifetime. And a subject that is absent in 99% of what calls itself the christian church today.

We'll be looking at many many supporting and expanding texts in scripture. So if you like to turn and follow in your bibles with me you'll be somewhat busy flipping to other places. Also, this manuscript will be available on line so if something here strikes you, all of the references will be posted there in that manuscript.

Let's begin with verse 19;

19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—

First we'll look at the words. Nothing is complex here. Three words that we might consider.

The first is teknon. Children. And it is a paternal word. These aren't children as opposed to adults. This is a tender and possessive word where the speaker is the cause. These teknon, these little ones, are his offspring.

The galatians are Paul's spiritual children. He is their father in the faith. They have a direct link, a direct connection to Paul. He opened the gospel to them and they responded. They are his children.

Paul wrote similarly to the Corinthian christians. 1 Cor. 4:

14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.

And this is a poignant reminder. Some robbers, some spiritual kidnappers have come and tried to uproot Paul. The judaizers have tried to displace Paul and steal his children. Frightening.

And the galatians, in their foolishness and bewitchment have followed these pied pipers down a dead end road to a dangerous cliff. And Paul continually reminds them, I'm your true spiritual Father. God used me to spawn you. You're my children. You wouldn't be reading this letter if it wasn't for me.

In fact you wouldn't be anything but your former godless selves, lost in pantheism, if God hadn't sent me to you. Slammed on my brakes with an illness. Dropped me into your laps, and it pleased God to save you and fill you with His Holy Spirit as a direct result of my preaching the gospel to you.

He is dad, they are his teknon. His kids. Many of the translators add the word *little* here in front of *children* to try to restore something of the possessive quality of the greek word here.

The King James and the New King James, and the Amplified as well as the ESV all have added the word *little* in order to try to help get us closer in english to what the greek word automatically supplied.

These are his kids. And he reminds them. You're mine. You are my children. If Paul hadn't come and the Spirit hadn't done a work in galatia where a bunch of spiritual babies were conceived by Paul's preaching, a church was born, a collective of christians became alive, called out of this world, called into God's kingdom, His family, if that hadn't happened, those judaizers wouldn't have come at all.

They dogged Paul's steps and followed Paul causing chaos amongst true christianity. They had no spiritual children of their own. They were following Paul around, molesting his children. They come after Paul and do their best to un-create what God had gestated through Paul's preaching.

The judaizers cannot say, like Paul just said here, my little children. They don't have any. They molest and destroy other peoples children. So it's of no small importance that Paul again, reminds them, they are his children.

And then Paul expands that idea. Not only are they his kids, but their gestation was painful to him. Paul says he is "IN" labor. Again. And the reference here is a parallel, a metaphor if you will, to a woman giving birth. Labor pains. The process of a birth.

You are my little children, and your birth was at great expense, great pain to me. Spiritual children come in pain, just as physical children do.

Listen to a blow by blow account of what it cost Paul to spawn a few spiritual children at Galatia. Here is the account in his ledger; 2 Cor. 11:

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, in beatings without number, in frequent danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked—a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the desolate places, dangers on the sea, dangers

among false brothers. 27 I have been in labor and hardship, in many sleepless nights, in starvation and thirst, often hungry, in cold and without enough clothing.

The judaizers who follow Paul around and molest his children have no such list of labor pains. Nobody persecutes them. Nobody's beating the judaizers. They aren't in danger and hardship and hunger and thirst. They can claim no children of their own. Just damaged, mangled stolen children taken from their true spiritual dad.

Paul lists all of the physical costs. Beatings so often he's lost track of the number, and imprisonments, 5 times forty lashes. That was the jewish punishment. 3 times beaten with rods. That was the gentile punishment. Stoned and left for dead.

These labor pains, the cost of a few christians in galatia, are very real. And then he says, besides the physical trauma's, there's the emotional costs of loving your children;

28 Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is made to stumble without my burning concern?

And here's the heart break. In physical birth, labor pains happen only once, and then the joy of the love of your offspring makes you forget the pain, right? I have proof. We have 3 kids.

But Paul says, *19 My children, with whom I am again in labor . . .* Paul says, I've got to endure this pain . . . again! You were born. You were running well. You were thriving. But now I have to be in labor with you, again. Someone disturbed you. Molested you. Stalled you. Ultimately will kill you if God doesn't use my intervention.

But the intervention is like being in labor all over again. This is intensely painful for Paul. And it's heart pain.

When Heather was 10 she got run down by a truck. There was a gaping cut in her neck that avoided her carotid artery by millimeters. And Pam and I stood by her gurney while her little life was in the balance.

That's the emotional and spiritual trauma that Paul is enduring while his little ones are being disturbed and molested and their very spiritual lives are in peril. Labor pains in your heart.

We should stop here and say, this is what God expects and requires of His shepherds. Paul is the example of how all of God's shepherds should be connected to their little ones.

I have to confess that I can't teach this portion without a lot of conviction. I'm nowhere near anything like the love that caused Paul this kind of pain. This is very convicting for me. I fall far short. If Paul's example is normative, I'm a failure. But I'm the only failure you've got, so I keep going. At least I'm throwing some hay into the stall. Most churches don't even get that.

We've talked about parental love and ownership, and self sacrificing painful labor thus far. But we haven't gotten to the main theme yet. That was just the introduction. Paul's suffering labor pains, again, for his babies, but that's not the main point of this verse.

19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—

labor pains have an end. Right? One way or another. They come to an end. Hopefully with the joys of a healthy thriving new baby.

Paul's metaphor of labor pains also has an end in view. He is AGAIN in labor . . . until. Until what?? *19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—*

Words again. until Christ is formed. In you. The greek word for formed is morphothe. We get our word metamorphosis.

A baby in a womb is a great metaphor. We've all seen the pictures of how a baby takes form over the weeks in a mother's womb. It looks like a polywog at first. But a baby takes shape very quickly inside there. metamorphosis. morphothe.

Paul says he is in labor, again, until Christ is morphothe, formed inside his spiritual children.

Beloved, this is the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification. Let's throw some big words around, shall we. Major doctrines revealed to us by God, in this book. Ready? Got your thinking caps on. Tilted just right so you look smart. Maybe some black framed glasses? Scholars at the ready?

Election. Justification. Sanctification. Glorification.

Election took place in the mind of God, in eternity past, before the foundations of the world were ever laid, He chose you to be His own possession. If that makes you nervous, get over it. It damages your pride that God chooses who He desires and you've got nothing to do with any of it. God chooses who He chooses. He doesn't tell us why. He's God.

Justification took place, at a space in time, many centuries ago, when Jesus died on a cross, in your place. He took all of the punishment for all of your sins, upon Himself. He died the death you deserved. He rose again from the dead to give you His righteousness. Your sin liability is paid and replaced with His righteousness. Given to you. You are fully justified before God. You are hidden in Christ. Positionally righteous before God the Father with a righteousness not your own.

Glorification is yet future for us. It happens in a moment in time when we hear the shout, Come Up Here, and we rise, with new glorified resurrection bodies, and see His face for the first time. We will be glorified and live

with Christ forever.

What part did you have in any of those doctrines? None. None at all. And yet, if I gave all four doctrines, I haven't defined sanctification yet, but I will, if I gave all four doctrines a number from one to ten in order of the attention they get inside the church of God, it might go something like this;

Election. a 1 or maybe a 2. It scares us. Our brains can't really even understand it. So we avoid it. Mostly. It's controversial to some but the Bible clearly defines election. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.

Justification. That's an 8 or so out of 10. That's what Christians and churches talk about most. Justification. We went to the Baptist church for many years. Every Sunday, week in, week out. Justification and singing *Just as I am without one plea*, over and over, trying to get someone, anyone, to come down that aisle. Justification. Pleading with people to be saved.

Billy Graham crusades. Justification. On steroids! George Beverly Shea, singing the invitations as people stream out of the aisles coming to the center of the stadium. Justification is IT. And then it stalls.

You're saved! Get on with your life. Never question your salvation. You're good to go.

Glorification. Maybe a 3 or a 4. We like to think about heaven. How it's going to be. Although that may be reduced to a 1 or a 2 in America in the 21st century, because we're so comfortable and satisfied in this life, we don't think much about the next one.

Not too concerned about glorification. Hey, I'm retired and my health is still good. I sleep until I wake up. Then I have my coffee. And then I plan out what little I might accomplish each day. I've got it made! Why would I think about glorification. Heaven. Earth is treating me pretty good.

Well, sanctification might affect that. Sanctification, as a doctrine, is a 1 or less. Some of you don't even know there is such a thing as sanctification. You don't know what the word means and at this point, you're not too sure you want to find out.

Sanctification. The word. The literal meaning is to be separated. Separation. If I go out front in a month or so and pick a hat full of apricots and bring them into the kitchen and set them on the counter, those apricots are sanctified. Separated from the limb they grew on and brought to a new location.

That's the simplest sense of it. Separation. But in the new testament the word, *hagiasmos* always has the sense of being separated unto holiness. We're called out of this condemned perishing filthy sinful world and separated from the condemned. Separated out of Satan's perishing world and gathered unto Holiness. Gathered from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. Gathered out of sinfulness and brought into holiness.

We are gathered out of this world, into Christ. In one sense that is complete at the moment of our salvation. At the moment of justification, where we believed on Christ and asked for Him to be ours and us to be His, when His Holy Spirit came to live in my heart, sanctification, separation out of this condemned world, and into the safety of Jesus, happened in a moment. Positionally. Positionally, sanctification, called out of this world unto holiness, happened in a moment.

But practically, that metamorphosis, the forming of Christ in my soul, that process where the old Jim lessens and the new Jim, a Jim that thinks like Christ and looks more and more like Christ happens, incrementally, is the doctrine of sanctification. Incremental increased separation unto Godliness. Holiness. *You shall be holy for I AM holy.* 1 Pet 1:16

Holiness is not optional. God is holy. When we see Him we will be holy or we will not be in His presence. That process isn't pie in the sky later. It

begins now. It is a life long process with the indwelling Holy Spirit prompting my conscience to choose holiness.

I don't just ask Jesus into my heart and then say, OK, see you in about 50 years when you call me up to heaven, and never think of Him again. Or do we? Think about all the christians you know who live as if that's what's happening.

Got my fire insurance policy locked in the safe deposit box, thank you very much Jesus, give me a call in 50 years. Nothing else expected or desired. I have to say, most of the so called christians I know live that way.

The evangelical church in the United States spends 95% of their effort getting you saved, and after that, good luck. Have a nice life. See you in the sky when Jesus comes to pick us up.

That isn't biblical! That's why I try to get christians to read Bunyan's book. ***Pilgrims progress***. Your life as a true christian is a journey that lasts the rest of your life until either Jesus returns or you die.

That journey is called sanctification. Little by little our old flesh is replaced by a new you that is morphed more and more into the likeness of Jesus. *19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you*—

Do you have a sense of Christ being formed. In you. Over time. Over the long haul? You say, how? What do I do? How does it happen?

When I was a brand new christian, I remember very well, that summer, my grandparents who I was living with, I was just 18, they left on a four week trip with close friends, to Mexico. I had the house to myself.

I dug out all of my dad's old Bible school books and began to read through the new testament. I inherited a Vine's dictionary and a Strong's concordance from my dad's book box. I read through the entire new

testament in that month, learning all I could. And I attended youth group and church at Grace Community.

I was in a mad rush to get the foundation laid as quickly as possible and get on about the business of serving Jesus. I had a mountain top experience. A real one. Actual mountain. About 8500 elevation. Sitting on top of a pile of granite. Praying about all of this, brand new to me. And the answer came. Time in the Spirit. Time with Jesus. Quality time, with Him.

And now, 10,000 bad decisions later, here I am. I haven't gotten very far. For me, sanctification has been mortifyingly slow. But I have always been cognizant of growth and change. So much slower than I wanted. But the Lord has been faithful in all of my unfaithfulness.

Back to our question. How does sanctification happen. How do you get formed more and more into the image of Jesus. Christ in you, the hope of glory. How do I change and grow, more like Him.

It isn't rocket science. He tells us how it happens. Are you ready? John 17. Jesus high priestly prayer for us. Picking it up in vs. 14;

14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

There's our beginning sanctification. If we belong to Christ, if we are these who the Father has given Him, and belong to Him, already the world hates us because we are not of the world. That separation out of this world, ruled by Satan, happens for every true christian.

It's like what John reiterates in 1 Jn. 5:19 *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* That same separation from the world. If the world loves you and loves what you're doing, you're obviously doing christianity wrong. Jesus prayed for us because if we're separated out of this world, the world will hate us. That's normative. Jn. 17

15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

This is positional truth that must become practical truth. We're still in the world, but if we belong to Jesus, we are not OF the world. Our citizenship is in heaven. That irritates the world. Holy living in this world is like salt in an open sore.

Then Jesus defines how long term separation and growth as a new creation takes place over the long haul of years. Long term sanctification which forms the image of Christ in our lives, our beings over the long years that we walk with Him in this world. This is the main verse I want you to hear and understand.

17 Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.

Did you get that. That's like the instruction sheet for real practical long term christian growth. Sanctification. Sanctify them by what? The truth. Where do we find that? Thy WORD is truth.

John put two and two together for us. He begins his gospel with these words. *In the beginning was the what? Word. . . and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* And then in vs 14. *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* He's talking about Jesus.

Long term sanctification over a lifetime happens by drawing closer and closer to Jesus, who IS the word, as we daily daily daily spend time with Him, beholding His glory, in this book. There's no other formula. Nor does there need to be.

Love for Jesus is the motivation. If you love someone, you want more and more and more of them. Jesus is the book. The book is Jesus. Jesus is the book is Jesus. If you love Him and want more of Him, open the book and gaze in at His glory. Time, with Jesus, in this book, gazing at Him, at His

glory, from Genesis to Revelation, it's all Him, that is what causes us to be formed into His image.

17 Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.

Paul says the same thing, again. 2 Cor 3:18

*18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed** into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

There's our same word. Transformed. We gaze into the book, the Word, and over time, we are transformed into the image of Christ. From glory to glory.

Now then, I've got some scary news for you. If this isn't happening, in your life, you aren't a christian. Sanctification isn't optional. In a way, sort of, it's automatic.

Real authentic christians have a hunger. They have a spiritual union with Jesus. He is in us. We are in Him. That union is what happens to every saved person who belongs to Jesus, and who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

A hunger for more of Him is non optional. That's why I'm a bit of a pessimist when I run into people all over town who tell me they're christians. You are? How is it that you don't spend any time with Him? You're a christian but you don't need to come to church? How does that work?

The very definition of true salvation, being an authentic christian is the **union** of Christ In You, the hope of glory. If Jesus lives inside you, if that union is present and real, transformation is not an option. Christ formed in you is not an optional higher level of christianity.

If Christ isn't living inside your heart and you have no hunger for transformative change towards more holiness, more godliness, you simply

are not a christian. Sanctification is not optional. Jesus insists. And He has His ways of making you miserable when you choose sin over godliness.

Christ formed in you is the normative function every christian is experientially in the long process of . . . or perhaps you're not a christian at all.

Eph. 2:8 - 10 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

Verse 10 is the essence of sanctification. Vss 8,9 Salvation is a grace gift, God causes and completes all of it. Nothing for me to boast of in my salvation. God did all of it, even the gift of faith to believe in the first place derives from Him, not me.

I didn't make a decision. Remember decision magazine. I didn't decide for Jesus. Jesus quickened me from the dead, in vs. 5. My faith, my decision to believe was predicated by Him quickening my dead spirit to life. All of salvation is His gift and His accomplishment in me. No boasting about any decision I made. He decided in eternity past. No idea why. I'm usually everyone's last choice. But He chose me. That's all that matters.

Then in vs. 10. We are His workmanship. His creation. He chose us. He quickened us from the dead. He called us out of this condemned world. We are His new creations. We are His workmanship. Created IN Christ Jesus FOR good works.

That's the beginning of a life of incremental increases in godliness as Christ is formed in me, as I am in Him. *His Workmanship*. I am a work in progress. Laughter is expected if you know me. Definitely a work in progress, but that's a biblical definition of sanctification. Christ is being formed in me, as I gaze at Him, in this book. After 53 years, I can tell you, it is painfully slow. Disappointingly slow. But it's there.

When you understand this doctrine, you begin to see it everywhere. It's the main thing.

Romans 8:28 - 30 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are (the) called according to His purpose. 29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers; 30 and those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.*

You can find all four of the major doctrines I began speaking of within that text. election, justification, glorification, but right smack in the middle is the purpose for all of it. *those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become **conformed to the image of His Son***

Being conformed to the image of Jesus is the reason for everything God accomplished for us from eternity past to eternity future.

Sanctification is imperative. Hebrews 12:14 *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord,*

Did you get that. No one will see the Lord without sanctification. Did you also notice the first word in that verse. Pursue.

Sanctification is the one thing we do work hard at. That's why this is the forgotten doctrine. The doctrine that empties modern churches. The doctrine no modern christian will tolerate. The doctrine that causes people to go find someone else who will tickle their ears with Justification, Glorification, even election. Anything but sanctification. That's hard work.

We have to actually do the work of sanctification. We never work for our salvation. But after we are called out of this world and belong to Jesus, we always work towards the goal of the upward call in Christ Jesus.

Sanctification is work. We pursue sanctification.

Listen to Peter on this topic. 2 Peter 1:

*2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that **by them you may become partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5 Now for this very reason also, **applying all diligence**, in your faith **supply** moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these things are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Did you notice anything in there that sounded like; let go and let God? No. It sounds like a lot of hard work to me. Sounds like I'm the one who is supposed to appropriate the precious and magnificent promises that supply me with everything pertaining to life and godliness. Applying all diligence, supply all those things.

Sanctification is hard work. Is your bible dusty? Misplaced? God has given us everything we need for Christ to be formed IN us. But it's like the little signs that were in my mom's house and mine. *God supplies the bread, but He doesn't do the dishes.* or Pam has a sign. *Bed and breakfast. You make both.*

Salvation is by grace plus nothing. Sanctification is by hard work. Diligence is required.

Our final verse is the perfect ending of this discussion;
20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, because I am perplexed about you.

If Paul were here today and looked at the vast landscape of what claims to be the evangelical church in America today, I am convinced he would be far more perplexed than he is about the galatians.

The church in the USA is 3000 miles wide and an inch deep. 98% of so-called christians have no idea of sanctification. At all. Another 1 1/2% are aware, but ignore it. God will finish the job in the twinkling of an eye, when He comes for us. His job, not mine.

Maybe half of one percent are in some kind of pursuit of the formation of Christ in their lives, over time, as they study His book and spend quality time with Him, gazing into His glory, in His book, daily?

That perplexes me. I'm no Paul. I'm sure Paul would have plenty to say about the phenomenon. I think Paul would take us to a letter Jesus wrote to the church about such matters;

Rev. 3:15 *'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*