

UNTIL CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU

God's people are often spoken of as children. Jesus makes it clear that one must become as a little child to enter the kingdom of God Matt 18:1-3. Jesus addressed His disciples as children in John 13:33.

In Gal 4:19 the word "children" shows the tender affection Paul had for the Galatian Christians, just as an earthly father for his child. In this epistle Paul rebuked the Galatians for their wrong doing and tried to get them to see his interest in them as a father for his child. As his spiritual children, he knew they would be more inclined to receive his instructions. In verse 17 Paul indicates by the words "zealously affect" which means: to seek to draw over to one's side; to desire one earnestly; to strive after; that the false teachers were working themselves into the good graces of the Galatians. They wanted the Galatians to place all their affection upon them. These false teachers were trying to turn the Galatians against Paul, which caused Paul to be anxious about the Galatian Christians.

There are reasons for Paul's anxiety. He said "I stand in doubt of you I am afraid of you" V.11. Why was Paul afraid of them? Why did he stand in doubt of them? Standing in doubt of them means he was perplexed, or at a loss as to what to think about them. The reasons for these feelings that Paul had are expressed in Gal 4:10, 20. They observed days, months and years. They desired to be back under the law. They were dissatisfied with the sacrifice of Christ and had disregard for His authority.

The object of Paul's anxiety is expressed in Gal 4:19: "that Christ may be formed in you." The idea of the word "formed" is not external or transient, but inward or real. After our conversion we must strive to grow more like Christ. That is, the characteristics of Christ must be in us.

What does it mean for Christ to be in us? That means that Christ must reign in our hearts. To reign means to dominate as a king reigns over his subjects. Christ must have complete control over our lives. Christ must be first in our lives Matt 6:33. To accomplish this we must receive his word or His doctrine Jhn 15:7; 2Jhn 1:9, 10. Remember the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom Lk 8:11. Many today, even some members of the Lord's church, just as these Galatians, see no need for study of the scriptures 2Tim 2:15. Christ had not been formed in them - they were not fully converted to Jesus Christ. If we are truly converted to Christ, we will have His spirit within us Phil 2:5-8. These Galatians had been baptized Gal 3:27 but Christ was not strong in them. Just as a child is not full grown and does not possess the characteristics of their father immediately after birth, so a babe in Christ is not full grown after birth, the characteristics of Christ must be cultivated in the Christian.

Christ is formed in us as we take time to grow. A child will take on more physical characteristics of its parents as it grows to maturity. So do we as Christians take on more characteristic of Christ as we grow and mature through imbibing or taking the word of God into our hearts and making it a part of our lives 1Pet 2:2. Christ is formed in Christians as they grow up in Him Eph 4:13-15. When we grow up, that is, we are formed in Him; we are not tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We become mature enough to stand in the face of opposition. We are able to withstand the onslaught of

false doctrine. Christ is formed in us as we grow in grace 2Pet 3:18; as we add the Christian graces as discussed in 2Pet 1:5-10.

The question that each of us must ask ourselves is: Has Christ been formed in me? Rev 3:20 says He stands at the door and knocks. Are we willing to let him come in? If you have obeyed the gospel, are you acting like a mature Christian? Are the characteristics of Christ showing in your life? (JLH