

Gal.4:8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

4:9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

4:10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

4:11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

4:12 Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.

4:13 You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first.

4:14 And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

4:15 What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

4:16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

4:17 They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.

4:18 But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.

4:19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

4:20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

March 1, 2026 Galatians 4:8-20

Sermon Title: "Until Christ is formed in you"

[From Today's Sermon]

Last week's passage stated, "When we were children, we were in bondage under the so-called spiritual powers of this world." Today's passage also says, "You were slaves to the so-called gods, which are not gods. ... Why are you turning back to those powerless and worthless spirits, wanting to be enslaved by them all over again?"

Paul says, "Brothers and sisters, I urge you to be like me, for I have become like you."

What does Paul mean when he says, "I want you to be like me"?

"Until Christ is formed in you, I will be in labor again until Christ is formed in you."

"Even if I am poured out like a drink offering on the altar of your sacrifice and service, I am glad and rejoice with all of you." (Philippians 2)

Paul is not thinking about himself. His honor or achievements were not his concern. He said,

“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, so that I too may share in its blessings.” (1 Corinthians 9) “I first preached the gospel to you because I was weak in the flesh.” For him, to live was Christ; his life was one of devotion.

March has arrived. Good morning, everyone. While we recently had warm days with highs reaching 20 degrees Celsius, the temperature has since dropped to around 10 degrees, and this morning we still face sub-zero temperatures. During this season of significant temperature swings, and with pollen and yellow dust in the air, please take good care of your health.

Last week's passage stated this:

“When we were children, we were in bondage under the so-called spiritual powers of this world.”

Bound under the so-called various spiritual powers.

Various spiritual powers. These are forces that deceive people by proclaiming, “This is the way of the world, the great principle!” Today's passage also records this: “Why do you turn back to those powerless, feeble, various spiritual powers and become their slaves again? You are observing days, months, seasons, and years.”

It speaks of the importance, as mature adults, of fixing our eyes on the One who truly rules this world—invisible though He may be—rather than being captivated by superstitious notions like directions or auspicious dates, or influenced by the power of some visible person. It warns against trusting in salvation through human works, thinking, “I'm fine because I've done my duty.”

1 Peter 1:4 You have been given an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

1:5 You are being protected by God's power through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1:6 Though you may have to suffer for a little while now in various trials, this is to prove your faith's genuineness—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—so that it may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1:7 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now,

you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

1:9 because you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

4:8 In the past, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

4:9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back again to the weak and worthless elemental spirits? You want to be enslaved to them all over again!

4:10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

4:11 I am deeply concerned for you, fearing that my labor for you may have been in vain.

4:12 Brothers and sisters, I urge you to imitate me, as I have imitated Christ. You have never wronged me in any way.

4:13 As you know, it was because of a physical ailment that I first preached the gospel to you.

4:14 And even though my physical condition was a trial to you, you did not despise or reject me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, or even as Christ Jesus.

4:15 Where is that enthusiasm now? I tell you plainly, you would have given your own eyes to me if you could have.

This shows how changeable human hearts are. “Where is that enthusiasm now? I tell you plainly, you would have given your own eyes to me if you could have.”

It is presumed that when Paul said, “my body was weak,” he was referring to an eye ailment. Whether this was caused by repeated persecutions like stoning and flogging is unclear, but the condition of his eyes likely had a significant impact on his appearance.

2 Corinthians 10:9 But I do not want you to think that I am trying to intimidate you with my letters.

10:10 For they say, “His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speech is contemptible.”

10:11 Such people should take note: what we say in words written while absent, when present we do likewise.

10:12 We do not make ourselves equal or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. They measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, which is foolish.

10:13 But we will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God has assigned to us, in that sphere we have reached even to you.

2 Corinthians 12:1 Since I must boast, though it is not profitable, I will speak of visions and revelations of the Lord.

12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up to the third heaven.

12:3 Whether in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows—

12:4 and he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.

12:5 If I must boast, I will boast about the things that show my weakness.

12:6 If I choose to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from boasting so that no one will think more of me than what is deserved, because of the surpassing revelations I have received.

12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me.

12:8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

12:9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

12:10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

It is said that it was precisely because of such weakness that Paul was able to bring the gospel to the land of Galatia.

4:13 As you know, it was because of a physical infirmity that I first preached the gospel to you.

Romans 8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

8:15 You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which we cry, “Abba! Father!”

8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

8:27 And he who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

We know the words “all things work together for good.” Yet before we recognize that good, we must pass through various stages. For Paul, the persistent suffering came from his unanswered prayer for healing from the affliction he had repeatedly begged to be removed. Eventually, he came to understand: this was God's messenger to keep him from becoming conceited. And here too, though we do not know the exact circumstances, it was because of his weakness that the gospel came to be proclaimed in the land of Galatia. Truly, “when I am weak, then I am strong.” It is by being led through such experiences that “we know that God works all things together for good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Romans

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

5:3 Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

5:4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Such profound dealings of God are invisible to those who prioritize only their own desires. Those who pray, “Grant it immediately, for God can surely do it,” will never experience the world of God's deep dealings.

4:15 Where is that enthusiasm you had back then? I'll tell you plainly: you would have wanted to pluck out your own eyes and give them to me if you could have.

4:16 And yet, because I spoke the truth, have I become your enemy?

Those who harbor such immaturity in faith sometimes cannot endure God's guidance. Indeed, it is written here that Paul faced such strong opposition that they even became hostile toward him, insisting, "That cannot be true!"

There were those who led them there. There are people who lure church members with pleasing, easy words, drawing them toward a different path. Their goal is to draw people to themselves.

4:17 Their zeal for you is not out of concern for you, but to keep you away from me so that they may be zealous for themselves.

4:18 It is good to be zealous for what is good, always and not only when I am present.

4:19 My little children, I am in labor again until Christ is formed in you.

4:20 I wish I could be with you now and change my tone of voice, for I am perplexed about you.

Here we see Paul's parental heart. "My little children," why do you always remain so immature? Why do you so easily stray from the truth and get drawn to evil people?

We too were once children, bound under the so-called spiritual powers of this world.

4:8 In the days when you did not know God, you were slaves to those so-called gods that are not gods.

4:9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how can you turn back again to those weak and worthless elemental spirits? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

4:19 Oh, my dear children! I will be in labor again until Christ is formed in you.

4:20 I wish I could be with you now and change my tone of voice. I am perplexed about you.

Now I am speaking to you with a voice like a cry of supplication, but I wish to meet you with a gentle tone and in peace. Yet you do not allow me to do so. Oh, I am perplexed about you. Oh, my little children! Until Christ is formed in you, I will again be in labor pains for you.

Paul's parental heart shines through here.

Above all, let us desire to be united with Christ. Let us fix our eyes on the reality of this faith, live rooted in this One, and pray that He may be formed in us. This One is God. We desire never again to be “slaves to gods that are not gods,” nor to “return to those powerless, feeble, and worthless spirits, becoming their slaves once more.” We wish to continue choosing the better way, resisting the forces that would lead us back.

◇Prayer: **Heavenly Father, we thank You for today's worship. Paul's words resonate deeply: “I urge you, brothers and sisters... I am in labor again until Christ is formed in you.” Guide us to be redeemed from sin through Christ, born anew, and to live rooted in Christ. Guide all who suffer into God's salvation and peace. Bless our families and our neighbors. Use us for Your purposes. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.**