



Sermon, Sunday January 1, 2023 "Until Christ is Formed in You"

SCRIPTURE: Galatians 4:12-20 ¹² Brothers and sisters, I beg you: become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. ¹³ You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; ¹⁴ though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What has become of the goodwill you felt? For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They make much of you but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹ My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Introduction: Purpose of Galatians

Dear brothers and sisters!

The new year 2023 has begun. Let us greet each other with "Happy New Year".

In 2023, like the title of today's message, I bless all of us to better handle the pain of childbirth for our neighbors until Christ is formed in us.

The Galatian Church, which is the background of today's text, is an area belonging to the central region of Turkey today. The Galatian Church was established during the first missionary journey of the Apostle Paul (Acts 14:21-23). Paul stopped by Galatia on his first, second, and third missionary journeys to preach the gospel of Christ (Acts 14:1, 16:1, 18:23).

The reason the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians was because the Jewish legalists who entered the Galatian church emphasized the law and circumcision to the Galatians, saying that Paul's teachings were wrong. The Galatian church experienced great confusion due to these false teachings. Upon hearing this news, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter with the purpose of restoring pure faith by emphasizing salvation through faith alone, regardless of the works of the law.

In today's text, Paul exhorts the Galatian Christians to live the same life he lived under the law and to become free through Jesus (Galatians 4:12).

I hope that through Paul's advice today, we will be able to plan well for the goals and directions of our lives in 2023.

Body: Apostle Paul's concern for the Galatians

Today's text describes the personal relationship between the Apostle Paul and the Galatian Christians. The Apostle Paul persuades the Galatian church members through his personal relationship with them instead of through solid doctrine.



The Apostle Paul reminded the Galatian church members of this the first time he visited Galatia. Paul mentions the love of the Galatians, who accepted him as an evangelist without prejudice despite his physical illness. According to the description of today's text, the Galatian church members loved Paul deeply, for he testified that **'if it had been possible, they would have torn out their eyes and given them to me'**.

By the way, Paul says that the relationship between the Apostle Paul and the Galatians has now become like a relationship between enemies. And it is said that the reason the relationship between Paul and the Galatians grew apart was because of the alienation by the Jewish legalists (Galatians 4:17).

If our hearts are filled with the gospel of Jesus, we will practice love, tolerance, forgiveness, and mercy toward our neighbors. But when the law rules our hearts, condemnation, unbelief, murmuring, pride, and bigotry rule us. Why do human beings live with the temptation to return to the life of the law in the life of freedom given by the gospel?

The reason is simple. Because we want what we see, and we love it.

So, there are many cases where we are indifferent to the invisible faith or the grace of the Lord. We want grace and blessings that can meet our needs and that we can see.

However, the blessing of being a child of God, the blessing of forgiveness of sins, the blessing of walking with the Lord, the blessing of eternal life, and the blessing of being the offspring of the covenant are all given to us through perfect unity with Jesus. Therefore, only complete faith in the Lord brings us true freedom. Then, how should we strive to enjoy the full freedom and love of Christians given to us?

First, we must form the image of Christ in us. We must examine our faith in this. In other words, we must check whether we are living a life of legalistic faith or enjoying Christian freedom and love through faith.

At the end of Galatians chapter 4, Apostle Paul explains the difference between living under the law and living freely in the gospel by faith through the parable of Hagar and Sarah. In conclusion, Paul says that living under the law is a life of slavery and living by faith in the gospel is the life of a free person. Paul goes further and mentions in Galatians chapter 5 the nine fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) that we obtain through Christian freedom and love. (Galatians 5:22-23) He also mentions what are the acts of the sinful nature; (sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like) of those who live under the law. (Galatians 5:20-21)

The look of our life of faith in 2023 does not change according to our emotions and circumstances, but we hope that we can check our lives through the Bible, the Word of God. Of course, in the process of examining our lives through the Bible, we must not make the mistake of interpreting the Bible arbitrarily or using it as a means for living according to the law.

If we are not sure what the emotions and thoughts are in our hearts, we should be able to ask the Holy Spirit to guide our emotions and thoughts. Please do not forget that the path of faith is not by our will and effort, but by the guidance of the Lord through acceptance and obedience to the path that the Lord has completed for us. So, to form the image of Christ, we must not forget that what we need most is humility and obedience to the Lord. What else, then, must we do to strive for full Christian freedom and love given to us?

It is the life of bearing our cross. According to the Galatians' expression today, it is to handle the pain of childbirth in our lives. To live with our own cross means that we must eventually deny ourselves and live a life of love and devotion toward our neighbors.

Dear brothers and sisters! Please remember.

For us to live by faith, we must be able to deny our thoughts and experiences.

For a family to be harmonious, there must be the devoted love of someone in the family.



In addition, for the community and society to become one and reconcile, the dedication and sacrifice of someone in the community is required. All these things take on the pain of childbirth in our lives.

The answer to why we must endure the pain of childbirth if we have faith lies in the love of Jesus on the cross. This year, I pray that the love of the cross of Jesus will fill our hearts.

Conclusion: The Cross of Christ and My Cross

Now let's summarize today's message. It's the first day of the new year 2023.

Dear Brothers and Sisters! Please don't forget.

The center of the Christian faith is the cross of Christ. The cross is a symbol of the love of Jesus Christ and the ultimate in suffering. The fact that we are saved because of the cross of Christ means that we also must carry our own cross.

True faith has the power to change pain and suffering into great blessings. Also, true faith is to serve our neighbors by participating in all the hardships of the world. The only way we can overcome all the pain and suffering in the world is through true faith in our Lord and His cross. Therefore, I hope that all of you who live with the pain of childbirth that we must endure in our lives continue until the image of Christ is formed in us this year.

