

Galatians 4:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Analysis

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, Paul's maternal imagery reveals pastoral heart. "My little children" (teknia mou, τεκνία μου)—term of endearment, literally "little born ones." The diminutive expresses affection and concern for their spiritual immaturity. "Of whom I travail in birth again" (hous palin ὄδινό, οὖς πάλιν ὡδίνω)—I'm experiencing birth pains again. ὄδινό (ώδίνω) means labor pains, the anguish of childbirth. Paul initially travealed to bring them to spiritual birth through the gospel. Now he agonizes again, fearing he must rebirth them.

"Until Christ be formed in you" (mechris hou morphōthē Christos en hymin, μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῇ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν)—until Christ is formed, fashioned, shaped in you. Morphoō (μορφώω) means to form, shape, transform. The goal of gospel ministry isn't mere behavioral modification but Christ-formation—Christ's character and image developing in believers through the Spirit. Their drift toward law threatened this formation. Legalism doesn't form Christ but malforms believers into anxious, proud religionists. Paul's anguish was that his spiritual children were being deformed rather than formed into Christ's image.

Historical Context

Paul frequently uses parental imagery for ministry (1 Corinthians 4:14-15, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Philemon 10). Apostolic ministry wasn't academic lecturing but spiritual parenting—investing life, agonizing in prayer, watching anxiously over

spiritual development. The "birth again" language suggests Paul feared the Galatians needed reconversion, not merely correction. If they embraced law-righteousness, they'd never truly understood grace. True conversion produces progressive Christ-formation through sanctification (2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 1:27-28).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Who has spiritually travailed over you in prayer and teaching, and how have you honored that investment?
2. Is Christ being formed in you—are you growing in Christ-likeness through the Spirit's work—or are you being malformed by legalism or worldliness?
3. For whom are you experiencing birth-pain concern, agonizing that Christ would be formed in them?

Interlinear Text

τεκνία	μου	οὐ	πάλιν	όδίνω	ἄχρις	οὐ
little children	My	of whom	again	I travail in birth	until	of whom
G5040	G3450	G3739	G3825	G5605	G891	G3739
μορφωθῇ	Χριστὸς	ἐν	ὑμῖν·			
be formed	Christ	in	you			
G3445	G5547	G1722	G5213			

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:29 (Parallel theme): For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Ephesians 4:13 (References Christ): Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Romans 13:14 (References Christ): But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Ephesians 4:24 (Parallel theme): And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Colossians 4:12 (References Christ): Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Colossians 3:10 (Parallel theme): And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Philippians 2:5 (References Christ): Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

James 1:18 (Parallel theme): Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Colossians 1:27 (References Christ): To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Philemon 1:10 (Parallel theme): I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: