

Until Christ Is Formed In You

Lyall Johnston—February 17, 2024

This is talking about an ongoing process that God the Father is doing within us. Let's commence this message by turning to:

Philippians 3:1: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in *the Lord*..."

In another place Paul says, 'Rejoice, I say again, Rejoice.'

- this is something that God is pleased with
- this is something that God wants us to do

Rejoice in His presence, *to thank Him, to praise Him for everything He does for us every day*, right down to the very breath of life. Every breath that we take is a blessing from God because that represents life. But not life eternal. That's something that we are striving for, and that is something we are seeking after.

"...Indeed, for me to write the same things to you *is* not troublesome, but for you *it is safe*" (v 1).

Why? Well, because the churches, and primarily those that Paul was pastoring in the Gentile areas and regions of Asia Minor and in Europe, he said:

Verse 2: "Beware of dogs..." Here he's referring not to physical animals, but he's referring to human beings: religious zealots, Judaizers who were troubling the brethren, trying to bring them under the Old Covenant practices, which have been abolished or were finally obliterated or done away with, with the temple when that came down.

So, some of those practices did continue. Once the temple was demolished they could no longer practice their sacrifices and other religious ceremonies because the New Covenant had supplanted and had replaced the Old Covenant.

But the Jews that Paul is talking about here, these dogs, had not accepted the Gospel of Christ.

- they rejected Him
- they rejected His way
- they rejected His message

So, Paul said, "...beware of evil workers..." (v 2).

These dogs, he also classifies them as evil workers, and then he identifies them:

"...beware of the concision" (v 2)—*which is a play on words with the circumcision of the flesh!*

Rather than the *circumcision of the heart*, which God even called the ancient people of Israel,

too. He said that he talked to them and told them that they have uncircumcised hearts.

Of course, the New Covenant is one where we are circumcised in the heart. That's another message which is a very interesting one indeed.

Verse 3: "For we are the circumcision..."

Now he's talking about spiritual circumcision, *the circumcision of the heart*, which comes down to the subject of repentance, of baptism, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, following baptism.

Verse 3: "For we are the circumcision, who serve God in the spirit..."

That's the difference of serving and trying to serve God as the Jewish people, so the Jewish infiltrators were trying to teach the Galatians and the other Gentile Churches rather than the circumcision of the heart.

Spiritual circumcision contra the physical circumcision. Physical circumcision was no longer necessary, no longer required under the New Covenant, only circumcision of the heart, which is the *spiritual circumcision!*

He goes on to say, "...and rejoice in Jesus Christ..." (v 3).

Here's that *rejoice again*. So, he's encouraging all brethren, even us today, *that we need to rejoice in Christ Jesus!*

Referring back to this matter of physical circumcision being put upon the Gentiles, "...and do not trust in the flesh" (v 3).

John 6—here we have one absolutely, mind-blowing text, but it's absolutely powerful and one that we can perhaps all remember to learn by heart.

Here Jesus is talking and we're breaking into His conversation with His disciples. I just want to read this one verse, you can read the context before and after to get the context of this. But Jesus had said some things that had offended some of His followers, and He asked them a question:

John 6:61: "But Jesus, knowing that His disciples were complaining about this, said to them, 'Does this offend you?'"

He was talking about himself being the Bread of Life, and how that they were to eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, which is another subject, but very important coming up to the Passover season.

- let's inscribe this
- let's write this
- let's ask God to inscribe it in our mind and heart

Verse 63: "**It is the Spirit that gives life...**"

We're talking here about Christ being formed in you or in us. It is the Spirit that gives life. So, it's the Spirit that is going to be forming, and that in fact is for those who have been baptized and those who have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit that is doing that work, that inner working within us that Paul mentions so many times.

"...**the flesh profits nothing...**" (v 63). *We need the flesh to work and to live in this human life, but:*

- when it comes down to immortality
- when it comes down to the eternal life

the flesh indeed profits nothing!

As Jesus said, v 63 "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, *they* are Spirit and *they* are Life."

What are the words that Jesus spoke to us and Jesus speaks to us today? Well, they're contained in the entirety of the Old Testament and the New Testament, from Gen. 1 to the very last verse of Revelation. They are all the words that proceeded from the mouth of God as He either spoke them or gave them to His prophets or apostles to speak them and then to record them and to write them. That's profitable for us today. This is the Truth.

"...The words that I speak to you, **they are Spirit...**" They're not flesh; the written Word of God ***is Spirit***, not flesh.

What's more, Jesus said, they are Life. Not only life now while we are living in the flesh, but it's talking about ***eternal Life, immortal Life, living into the ages of eternity!*** Quite a powerful, quite an instructive verse for us to keep in mind.

Let's turn now to that verse in Galatians that we've taken the title for today, Gal. 4. Now, problem; we can mention that Paul was frustrated by the Church and by the brethren in Galatia. In fact, they had been listening to these false teachers, these interlopers that were visiting and troubling the Church like dogs, barking away at your heels, trying to snap at your heels, trying to bite the flesh on your legs. He said:

Galatians 4:11: "I am afraid for you, lest somehow I have labored among you in vain."

- preaching the Gospel
 - preaching the Word of God
 - bringing them to a knowledge of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ
 - bringing them to spiritual maturity
- so that they can grow up in the grace and the knowledge of God*
- learning to know and have a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Yet, here Paul says, in spite of all his work, v 11: "I am afraid for you, lest somehow I have labored among you in vain."

Well, let's drop now to v 19: "My little children..."—*they were like little children!*

They had not yet fully grown up and matured, of which he desired. As the rest of the verse goes on to say

"...for whom I am again **laboring in pain...**" (v 19).

Any true minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is going to be doing this. He's going to be spending his life "**...laboring in pain...**" [Why? What for?] ...**until Christ has been formed in you.**"

Now, we know that Christ was fully formed in the flesh as it says in Hebrews, but for us, we will accomplish a certain amount of Christ being formed in us, perhaps some more than others. But one thing for sure, that because Christ is working within us, there will be a level and degree of the mind of Christ within us, some die early, some die late, ***but God is the One Who knows the heart!*** He knows the intent of the heart, and he'll make His judgment based on each one individually.

He will not be making judgment on you based on somebody else within His Body. He does it on an individual basis, having known each one personally by His Spirit that is within us. But Paul here as an elder, as an apostle, was laboring ***until Christ was formed in them!***

The *fully formed* for us as a personal point here, *I believe that will take place in the first resurrection!* **WHEN** we hear Christ's voice, we're raised from the grave, **THEN** we will be perfect. **THEN** He will be fully formed in us, because it says in John's Epistle (1-John 3) how we're going to see Christ because we are going to be looking, we will look exactly as He looks.

Philip. 2—we find another statement that is very interesting about the mind of Christ and about ***Christ being formed within us!***

Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you...”—*the mind of Jesus Christ; we have to let it!*

How do we let it? ***We study the Word of God, which is the mind of Christ and the mind of the Father!***

We pray to the Father through Christ to get to know Him and Christ more fully. As we do that, and:

- as we study the Word
- as we obey the Word
- as we walk in the Word

we’re actually letting the mind of Christ dwell within us!

Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you, which *was* also in Christ Jesus.”

Let’s read a little bit about that mind now. Here’s how Christ ***can be formed within us:***

Verse 7: “But emptied Himself...” ***that is, as God, He emptied Himself of His power, of His glory, and became a man,*** flesh, bone, blood. Yes, He had the Holy Spirit from birth, but He was fully man. Fully man like you and me. It had to be that way, otherwise we would not have a Savior. ***A most important point!***

Verse 6: “Who, although He existed in *the* form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, *and* was made in *the* likeness of men...” (vs 6-7).

- Is that an act of humility?
- Is that not an act of absolute, total, utter humility to take on human flesh?

In fact, Paul said that He had no confidence. He didn’t trust in the flesh. He had no confidence in the flesh like Paul, because ***his trust and faith was totally in God!***

Verse 8: “And being found in *the* manner of man, He humbled Himself, *and* became obedient unto death, even *the* death of *the* cross.”

That’s the kind of life that God is wanting to build into us. There’s a pattern for that.

Verse 9: “Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him and bestowed upon Him a name, which *is* above every name.”

We have, because of the deeds of Christ and the Father, we have access to the same very goal.

Col. 3—just another way of how Christ is being fully formed within us. This has to do with what we do in regard to the Word of God and to the words of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:16: “**Let** the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”—*in everything, until Christ is formed within us!*

Verse 17: “And *in* everything—whatever you do in word or in deed—*do* all in *the* name of *the* Lord Jesus... [which means that we’re going to be doing those things that are pleasing in the eyes and in the sight of God] ...giving thanks to God and *the* Father by Him.”

2-Cor. 10—we’ll pay particular attention to one particular statement here, which is critical for us as the children of God. As we work toward having Christ form:

- His character
- His mind
- His thinking
- His Spirit

The Spirit of the Father within us!

Here’s the challenge; this is a daily challenge; this is a regular challenge:

Paul is being criticized and condemned by some of the brethren who had been influenced by infiltrators into the Church, showing how that we can handle these problems.

2-Corinthians 10:4: “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal...”

We can see some of those weapons, which is the armor God has given to us in Eph. 6. We have those weapons of defense. We have one major weapon of offense, and that’s the Word of God. That’s the Word that Jesus gave to us, because ***Jesus Christ is the Word of God!***

Jesus Himself used the Word of God as a weapon as we read in Matt. 4 and Luke 4, when Satan challenged Him, when Satan was throwing his fiery darts at Him. Jesus used the Shield of Faith, the faith that He had toward His Father.

So the fiery darts of Satan did not have the slightest impact, impression or influence in His life. He used the Word of God, which is the Sword of the Spirit, and He challenged Satan.

He said, ‘it is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’ That’s our calling, brethren! That’s our challenge ***to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God!***

That is one of the major ways that Christ will be constantly, day-by-day, ***being formed within us!*** The other we know, of course, is by prayer. As

we have that personal intimate contact with the Father through Christ, we get to know Him.

Remember what John 17:3 where Jesus was praying to the Father; He said:

John 17:3: “For this is eternal life We want to know what eternal life is...[This is what eternal life is] ...That they... [you and me] ... may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send.”

It’s that personally knowing Jesus and the Father. We know Them through prayer. We know Them through having Them inscribe Their love and Their words into our heart and into our mind by the finger of God. He writes them in our heart:

- as we read them
- as we obey them
- as we keep them
- as we maintain that contact

Day-by-day we’re getting to know the Father and Jesus Christ in the Spirit. The Spirit—not in the flesh; the flesh profits nothing—*‘it’s the Spirit that gives life.’* The Spirit is in the Words and in the Truth of God.

2-Cor. 10—here are the things, the challenges, what we have to do is, with the weapons that God has given to us, *overthrow strongholds.*

So we search our lives. We’re never satisfied that there are no strongholds in our lives. We’re looking for them; we don’t want anything in there that’s going to be a blockage between our relationship, between us and God the Father and Jesus Christ.

2-Corinthians 10:5: “Casting down *vain* imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity...”

This is the crux; this is our life; this is our life’s work. In part, along with the rest of the words that God gives us, that He wants us to follow.

“...and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ” (v 5)—and that’s talking about *the overthrowing of strongholds!*

That’s talking about the “Casting down *vain* imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God...”

All those things God has called us to: “...and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ” (v 5).

We need to think about that! We need to spend time before God’s Throne asking Him to help us to know that we are in fact receiving:

- His help
- His power
- His strength

“...bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.”

We need to remember and recall those words of 2-Cor. 10:5. Run them off by heart. Even go back to them day-by-day and recite them. Day-by-day, take them before the Throne of God and ask for His help and He will help you.

As you pray to Him, as you read the Word, you’re going to find that day-by-day it becomes a little easier.

- Will you have any challenges?
- Will you be able to completely bring every thought into the captivity of Christ?

That’s up to us! What we must be doing is *fighting for that!*

Let’s see how Paul approached this whole situation. Very powerful chapter here in Philip. 3. Paul begins this particular chapter by saying that.

Philippians 3:4: “Though I might also have *reason* to trust in *the* flesh...”

Remember, Jesus said, John 6:63: “...the flesh profits nothing...” So, Paul says,

Philippians 3:4: “Though I might also have *reason* to trust in *the* flesh. If any other thinks he has *cause* to trust in *the* flesh, I *have* much more... [if you want to play games, Paul goes on to show]: ...circumcised on *the* eighth day; of *the* race of Israel, from *the* tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; with respect to law, a Pharisee; with respect to zeal, persecuting the Church; with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless” (vs 4-6).

Can any of us claim that? *I doubt it!*

Verse 7: Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as* loss for the sake of Christ. But then truly...” (vs 7-8)—*everything that was advantage to me!*

- What’s an advantage to you?
- What do you count as an advantage?
- Can we say the same things that Paul says here?

Verse 8: “But then truly, I count all things to be loss... [Why?] ...for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ...”

To know Christ and Him crucified, which was the center of His preaching, the center of His Gospel.

“...for the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things... [we know that Paul did more so than any one of us] ...and count *them* as dung..." [that's why] ...that I may gain Christ... [until Christ, as he said to the Galatians, is formed in you] ... and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, but that *righteousness*, which *is by the* faith of Christ, the righteousness of God *that is based on faith*" (vs 8-9)—*and that is of the Spirit!*

Verse 10: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if by any means... [Christ may be formed within me, I guess is what he's saying] ...I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead; not as though I have already received..." (vs 10-12).

None of us can say we've already received, we've already made it; we're on the path. We're in the walk; we're on the road toward the Kingdom of God.

- it's a day-by-day work
- it's a day-by-day struggle
- it's a day-by-day time to rejoice

that God has called us and has given us this opportunity for immortality, to be in the Kingdom of God!

Verse 12: "Not as though I have already received, or have already been perfected; but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

That was to do the work of God, and that was to be in His Kingdom.

Let's close by going back to John 6:63, and let's ask God to inscribe this into our hearts and into our mind.

John 6:63: "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you, they are Spirit and they are Life.**"

Scriptural References:

- 1) Philippians 3:1-3
- 2) John 6:61, 63
- 3) Galatians 4:11, 19
- 4) Philippians 2:5-9
- 5) Colossians 3:16-17
- 6) 2 Corinthians 10:4
- 7) John 17:3
- 8) 2 Corinthians 10:5
- 9) Philippians 3:4
- 10) John 6:63
- 11) Philippians 3:4-12
- 12) John 6:63

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- 1 John 3
- Ephesians 6
- Matthew 4
- Luke 4

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