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# Sermon Notes

July 10, 2022

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

## The Anguish of Childbirth Galatians 4:8-20

### Deeper Joy... Greater Freedom!

- ❖ The Christian life centers on the life changing, life-giving transformation we experience as God delivers us from slavery, unites us with Jesus, and adopts us into His family
- ❖ Blessings and privileges that belong to all whom God adopts into His family
  - privileges of sonship and riches of our inheritance are available immediately when we come to faith in Christ
  - indwelling presence, wisdom, guidance of the Holy Spirit
  - the living Word of God
  - freedom from slavery to the law
- ❖ Why would anyone who has been brought from death to life want to go backward and put themselves into bondage all over again?
  - why squander your legacy as Esau squandered his?
  - why be like a dog returning to its own vomit or a pig that has been bathed wallowing in the mud?
  - why would anyone adopted by God ever want to go back and work for the devil?

### The “Forest”

- ❖ Paul’s warm, brotherly, affectionate tone
- ❖ Paul asks questions designed to make people think and to “take stock” of themselves (vv. 9, 15, 16)
- ❖ Though Paul is perplexed, frustrated and exasperated with the Galatians, his abiding love and affection continues to shine through
  - a practical lesson for us as we seek to influence others for Christ
  - don’t “back people into a corner”
  - ask people to stop, think and form their own, **logical** conclusions about essential truths
  - the danger of making false conclusions about others
    - up until now, Paul addresses the Galatians as though they are truly born-again
    - now, Paul opens the door to the possibility that some among them are only examples of a “false labor” that did not result in a real birth
- ❖ It is only because and on the basis of Paul’s love that he has the right to speak so forthrightly and in such a deeply emotional way with his friends
- ❖ Paul appeals to his friends with the heart of a pastor who is intent on protecting his sheep from the imminent danger of going over the cliff of apostasy

### The “Trees”

- ❖ Know the freedom of God’s grace (vv. 8-11)

- someone who **KNOWS** God
  - not as an idea, a principle, or a philosophical system
  - a personal, real, living relationship with a real, personal, living God
- no longer enslaved by *those that by nature are not gods*
- someone who is **KNOWN** by God
  - we are the sinful people whom God is seeking and saving
  - God knew us **LONG BEFORE** we ever came to know Him
  - the initiative for membership in God's family comes entirely from God Himself
- God's love does not waver or fluctuate on the basis of whatever heartaches we cause Him
- ❖ Delight in the ministry of God's Word (vv. 12-16)
  - God's children find enjoyment in the ministry of God's Word
  - remember the blessed, happy condition you felt when you first heard the good news about Jesus Christ
  - when Paul first came to them in the weakness of his infirmity, the Galatians gladly took Paul's words about Jesus Christ to heart
    - Paul's infirmity becomes God's opportunity
    - God's strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9)
  - although the Galatians once fell in love with God's Word, some are now starting to turn away from and reject the gospel

- ❖ Be transformed into the likeness of God's Son (vv. 17-20)
  - Paul is willing to welcome whatever pain is necessary (*the anguish of childbirth*) to see Christ formed in the lives of his friends
  - a true child of God is someone who is on a path that causes them to becoming more and more like Jesus
  - God's children
    - think more and more like Jesus thinks
    - love more and more what Jesus loves
    - do more and more what Jesus does
    - suffer more and more what Jesus suffers
  - Paul's ultimate goal is to see Christ take shape in the lives of others (Galatians 2:20)

### Personal Application

1. Paul defines the hallmarks of discipleship as being one who both knows God and is known **by** God, one who delights in God's Word, and one who is being transformed into the likeness of God's Son. How are any of those qualities apparent in your life? Where are you most in need of growth?
2. What approach are you most prone to use in influencing others for Christ? How does Paul's example of asking thoughtful questions without backing others into a corner cause you to consider ways in which you might revise and refine your approach?