

Christ Himself Lives in You! * Galatians 4:1-20
August 9, 2015 * Rod Fultz

A Parasite, is an organism that takes up residence in a host. That host could be the body of an animal or it could be a human being. The parasite feeds off of its host's nutrients in order to reproduce itself. As they multiply inside the host, parasites can suck the life out of an individual and sometimes even cause death.

Today, we are going to be talking the opposite kind of entity which takes up residence inside a human host. This resident comes to dwell inside of you not to mooch off of you nor to destroy you, but to actually impart increasing amounts of His own abundant life as His image is formed in you. For those of you who have come to believe the gospel, who have received Jesus into your soul as your Savior and king, Christ Himself resides in you. Not some emanation of Christ, not merely an angelic spirit, but the king of kings himself has come to live in you! Doesn't seem right, does it?

I want you to be freshly amazed reality and then take seriously the corresponding responsibilities of hosting the King of Kings in your body so that His priorities (laid out for us here in the text) begin to triumph over every competing priority in your busy lives.

A little background from last week: God reminded us that (through our union with Christ) we will not only inherit the whole Kingdom of God, but we will inherit God Himself! Today, Paul lays out both the privlidges and responsibilities of being heirs of God

Galatians 4:1–20 (ESV)

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

¹² Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are.

You did me no wrong. ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn

or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

In ancient times a common practice in writing a last will and testament was that if the heir to the estate was still a child when the owner died, the child was to be overseen by an adult (who had previously been appointed by the father) until the child reached adulthood. Upon the death of the one who made the will, the heir was instantly the owner of the entire estate, but the father knew that the childish heir needed some authority to protect him from his own youthful folly.

Galatians 4:1–3 (ESV)

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

Paul is using this analogy to show us that the law functions as a guardian for the children of God until such time as the Father opens our eyes to the good news of the gospel. But because of the selfishness of our flesh, the Law (in effect) enslaves us. “Don’t do this, instead do this” rubs us the wrong way. It chafes us. Our flesh wants to be in control. We do not like being told what to do or what not to do. In fact, telling a sinner not to do something is more powerful than telling him he can!

Your flesh wants freedom to do whatever is right in your own eyes. The law comes and says no. “Don’t worship what your friends worship; don’t covet another man’s wife or his possessions; don’t take the Name of the Lord in vain.” For no matter how acceptable it is in the movies you watch, the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes the Name of the Lord in vain.

Don’t murder. Don’t commit adultery. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Don’t do what everyone else is doing. Instead, you are bound do these things. Our flesh despises that kind of external, forced regulation.

A slave, by definition, is someone forced to do what he doesn’t want to do. Someone trying to keep the Law on their own strength is no different than a slave. Rules, even God’s holy rules, cannot in and of themselves produce human righteousness. But now Paul says to these Galatian Christians: you have been set free from external bondage by believing that Christ has fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law for you. Christ Himself resides in you.

1. Do Not Return to Slavery!

If you study the ugly history of the Transatlantic slave trade, one surprising component is that the vast majority of slaves were sold to the European and (later) American Traders by the Kings and Chiefs of the African nations themselves. The Europeans simply showed up with manufactured goods (cloth, guns, alcohol) which the Leaders wanted so badly that they were eager to enslave other Africans. In hindsight, we can clearly see that Satan was at work through the carnality of greed to physically enslave humans.

He still works the same way today. All False Religion is created by The Enslaver of souls, Satan himself, through appealing to our fleshly desires to do things our way for our gain. As an alternative to serving the creator of Heaven and Earth, he manufactures schemes and teaching which look and sound appealing to our flesh externally, but hidden within it is a hook to enslave your soul and infect you with the virus of self-righteousness.

One example: We took a quick trip up to Amish country in Pennsylvania, this past week. The Amish farms are so enjoyable to admire. Orderly, well kept, hard work is visible at every turn. Their lifestyle seems inviting in so many ways: traditions passed down from one generation to the next, simplicity, close to nature. We were going by an Amish museum and we saw some Muslim people going in. Someone in our car remarked, “That’s funny, a Muslim going in to visit the Amish!” It seemed unusual, but in reality both mindsets are remarkably similar. Both adhere to strict external rules and regulations for the body as a means of achieving or (what they would believe to be sustaining) righteousness. If you consider the dietary laws, the clothing, ordinances the restrictions on women, restrictions on use of technology, it is bondage.

Yet Christians are often lured back into the slavery of such legalism by how neat and tidy it appears on the outside. Consider the area of parenting. If someone comes along with what appears to be an airtight system of principles and methods that guarantee your offspring will turn out like assembly line versions of great automobiles, we think that’s the answer. And we bite, hook, line and sinker! That is exactly what the Judaizers were doing to these Galatian Christians. In response, Paul says no! You have been set free! Don’t become enslaved by external rule keeping again!

Galatians 4:8–10 (ESV)

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years!

You may have thought you were in control prior to your regeneration though the gospel, but you actually served the false gods of this world. You served the schemes and substitute deities of Satan, even if you grew up in a Christian home under the Law of God. Satan takes the holy commandments of God and warps them. He twists them through the wicked desires of our flesh to create bondage. The devil exploits God’s good Law to entrap men into emptiness and despair.

“God meant the law to be a stepping stone to liberty; Satan uses it as a cul-de-sac, deceiving his dupes in to suppose that from its fearful bondage there is no escape.”
- John Stott

We see that in Paul’s experience, detailed for us in Romans 7. We see it in a Roman Catholic Church monk named Martin Luther who put forth every ounce of his energy to try and keep the rules of God. He exercised such religious fervor in trying to atone for his own sin that he would flagellate himself with a whip, bare-backed and his crawled up steps. But now (Paul says to the Galatians) you have no excuse!! Christ Himself Resides in you. You know God, and He knows you! How can you desire that kind of slavery again? Paul says the same thing to the church at Colossae warning them not to be taken captive.

Colossians 2:20–23 (ESV)

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—²¹ “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Legalism will always produce self-reliant, self-righteous people who have no power to crucify the desires of their flesh because by focusing on rule keeping, they are avoiding the power cross itself. Do not return to such slavery! The Law was only designed to be our guardian until the date set by our Father to prepare us for this relationship:

Galatians 4:4–7 (ESV)

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Jesus Christ is the only human being to be born in the flesh as a Son of God. Adam and Eve were created as adults and because of the sin into which they fell. As their descendants, we were born under God’s wrath, in league with Satan through our flesh. But! At the proper time in the fullness of time, at the pinnacle of His-Story, God sent His Son, born the offspring of Eve (just as He promised), born under the Law of Moses (in order to completely fulfill that covenant), in order to redeem you from the Curse of the Law, so that you might receive adoption as sons!

Through the gospel God has adopted children into His family through uniting us with Christ, then giving us faith to believe that great news! Children of God, not born that way in the flesh but born of God’s Spirit, grafted into the rich root of Israel through faith in the One True Son of God.

Adoption of an orphan or of a Foster child is a unique activity. It is a love relationship that occurs entirely through the action of the adoptive parents. It is their initiative, their resources, their labor to bring the adopted child into their family. They decide and act to make the child

their own. In the same way it was God's initiative, God's power and God's decisive act which caused you to be born again and to be adopted into His family through Christ.

What kind of love is that? Why would God do that? Because it is His eternal desire is to be in close relationship with His children. He didn't just bring you into a huge stadium so you could be part of His crowd of fans. He didn't just accumulate your name as one of billions of likes on His Page. He didn't even hire you to be a part of His global corporation where He knows you by number if at all. He has sent the very Spirit of His Son to reside in your heart so that He could be your very own father and you His intimate child. Christ Himself Lives in you!

2. Practice Intimacy with God

You might feel that you are close to your children, especially when they are young. If you do, praise the Lord. But whether you are close to your children or not, understand today that there is no closer relationship in existence than that the intimacy between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God in Three Persons is One in essence, One in heart, soul and mind. What God has done in Christ is bring you into that very unity and intimacy of the Trinity. He has not made you god (that's Mormonism). He has brought you under the Headship of God the Son, and through the unity that Christ enjoys with the Father and with the Spirit He has given you free and full access to commune with Him in a relationship closer than any you will find on earth.

Galatians 4:6

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

1st – God the Father sent His Son into the world to live the life you could not and to die the death necessary to justify your sin debt.

2nd - The Father raised the Son from the dead!

3rd - God sent the Spirit of His Risen Son into your heart to live!

4th - Right now, God the Holy Spirit is communing with God the Father through God the Son from within your own heart!

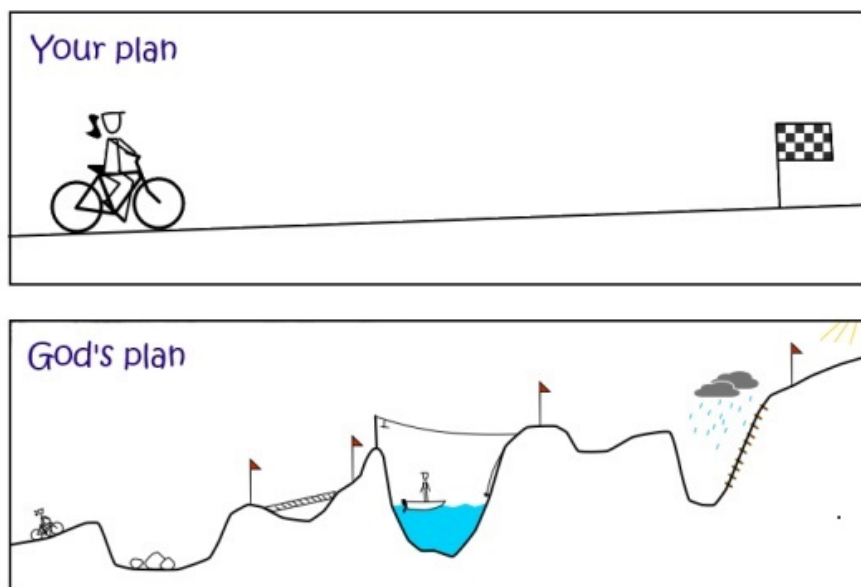
He is inviting you to join Him in that intimacy! That is how we pray. That is how we worship. That is how we have life. The Spirit is crying out, "Abba, Father." Abba is the Aramaic word we would translate Daddy or perhaps Papa. It connotes the intimate closeness of a child and a loving father. It is whatever word in any culture children joyfully shout when their Father walks through the front door. But we also see this word used by a full grown Son finds Himself in desperate need. Remember Jesus.

Mark 14:34–36 (ESV)

And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."

³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Perhaps you're at a point like that in your journey where life is not turning out like you had planned. You have been trying to make it happen but it's not.



Often, God will humble you through your circumstances so that you will stop trying to rely on your own mechanisms and crutches to get you through. And (like the Prodigal Son) coming running to His feet crying, “Abba, Father. I need You!” And when you are on the mountain peak to cry out thank you father!

When your spirit chooses to join the Holy Spirit in crying, “Abba, Father,” Paul says (Rom. 8) that the Holy Spirit bears witness within you that you are God’s own child, one with God, in union with the Son, through the Spirit.

Are you aware of what a supreme privilege it is to be able to call God your Father? Muslims know nothing of it. Deists know it not. But this is what has been granted to you in Christ Jesus. You who were far off have been brought near, into an intimate relationship with God Most High. This is at the very core of who you are as a Christian.

Galatians 4:7 (ESV)

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

You have the divinely imparted benefit of waking up in the morning and saying, “Good Morning Father,” of crying out from your heart (in unison with the Holy Spirit), “Abba Daddy. Be my God today. Lead me, forgive me, empower me to walk hand in hand with You.”

As you partake of His Word, meditate on and sing His Word. As you pray His Word back to Him, you do so not as some outsider quoting a mantra but as a member of His own household. In good times and in difficult times (and everything in between), practice intimacy with God. Christ

has come to dwell in you so that you can. The last responsibility and implication of this privilege of Christ Himself Resides in You:

3. Display His Image

Ultrasounds are a wonderful gift of technology. I can remember back in the early 90's when couples began showing us the 2D ultrasound images the radiologist had printed off for them. Maybe I just had an untrained eye but I always needed someone to interpret the images for me. "Can't you see, there's the head. There are his arms etc." Now, the images are 3D and even 4D! It is much easier to identify the characteristics of that little person!

Likewise as the Person of Christ is in us by His Spirit, His image ought to be increasingly on display through the "screen" of our lives. Our actions and words and demeanor show the world who it is that is being formed in us. For the Galatians, when they had first begun to follow Christ, His image was brightly on display. But now, false doctrine has made Him very, very blurry and they aren't appreciating Paul pointing out the problem

Galatians 4:12–16 (ESV)

Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Do you see in those verses Christlikeness? Like Jesus, and Paul as he follows Jesus, the Galatians were formerly willing to lay down their lives to bless others. That is one way you can display the image of the One residing in you today. Seek to prefer someone else's needs to your own. Be eager to lay down your "rights" to bless someone else.

It is critical to call on the Spirit of Christ within you to give you grace to do so. Paul asked the Galatians the same thing God may be asking you today. Are you progressing in displaying the love, the blessing of Christ at your workplace, in your church, in your family? Is the image of the Suffering Servant dwelling inside you on display? For the Galatians, the reason it was not is because they had been duped by false teachers.

Galatians 4:17–20 (ESV)

They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

The Word of God is the pen which the Holy Spirit uses to etch the 3D contours of Christ's image into our lives. Christ is formed in you through the progressive intake and application of His Gospel in your life. The image of Christ is formed in you as you gladly participate in your

sanctification, as you memorize Scripture as you become intentional about Spiritual Formation in your life, as you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Perhaps you have noticed but our world, our country, your family is not benefiting from a blurry resemblance of Jesus showing through your life occasionally. They need to see a 3D image of the Risen Christ though us so that His word gets accompanied by a visual.

You can't do that alone and the Good News is you are not intended to. The Spirit of Christ has come to dwell in you, to empower you to be conformed to His very own image.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.