

“The Goal of Every Pastor” Galatians 4:8-20, NASB

Arresting the Attention of the Listener:

Do you know the name **Peter Drucker**? Peter Drucker is one of the highest recognized names and respected authorities on the subject of **leadership**.

He once made the statement that the **four hardest jobs in America** are (in no particular order):

1. The **President** of the United States
2. A **university** president
3. The **CEO** of a hospital
4. A **pastor**

I know, right? Yes, **pastoring a church is a hard job**. For the record, I do work more than just two days a week. And, I’ve never played a round of golf! Frankly, though, there are a lot of difficult jobs out there in the enchanted land of employment. Yet, it does make you stop and think about what makes a pastor’s job so challenging, right? For one thing, a pastor’s job is exceedingly difficult **because of all the expectations** people may have of their pastor.

I found this **humorous** statement about the expectations people have of an **ideal** pastor.

Illustration:

Someone has suggested that an “**ideal**” pastor is one who preaches **exactly 20 minutes** and then sits down.

He **condemns sin**, but never hurts anyone’s feelings.

He works from 8:00 a.m. ‘til 10:00 p.m. in every kind of work, from **preaching to custodial** service.

He makes **minimum wage**, wears good clothes, buys books to study regularly, has a really nice family, drives a good car, and gives more money than most each week to the church.

The ideal pastor is **26 years old** with 30 years of pastoral experience.

He is at once **tall** and **short**, **thin** and **heavy-set**, and handsome.

He has one **brown eye** and one **blue eye**; his hair is parted in the middle with the left side dark and straight and the right side brown and wavy.

He has a burning desire to work with **teenagers** and spends all his time with the **senior adults**.

He **smiles** all the time with a **straight face** because he has a **sense of humor** that keeps him **seriously dedicated** to his work.

He makes **15 visits daily**--all to church members, spends all his time evangelizing the unchurched, and **is never out of the office**. Oh, the effect of tongue and cheek.

In this morning's text Paul provides a clue as to what **the goal of every pastor** should be as he stewards his high calling. Let's take a look.

[READ TEXT]

- 8 However at that time, when you **did not know God**, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.
- 9 But now that **you have come to know God**, or rather to be **known by God**, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?
- 10 You observe **days** and **months** and seasons and years.
- 11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.
- 12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*. You have done me no wrong;
- 13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that **I preached the gospel** to you the first time;
- 14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but **you received me as an angel of God**, as Christ Jesus *Himself*.
- 15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have **plucked out your eyes** and given them to me.
- 16 So have I become your enemy **by telling you the truth**?
- 17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.
- 18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.
- 19 My children, with whom I am again in labor **until Christ is formed in you**—

20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.¹

This text tells us quite clearly what the goal of every pastor should be. It is stated in **verse 19**.

****The goal of every pastor is the formation of Christ in the people (v. 19).**

Yet, how is Christ formed in us?

- 1). By **KNOWING** God (v. 8-9).
- 2). By **RECEIVING** the Word of God (v. 13).
- 3). By **BEING** Like Christ (v. 19).

How is Christ Formed in Us?

First, By **KNOWING** God (v. 8-9).

- 8 However at that time, when you **did not know God**, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.
- 9 But now that **you have come to know God**, or rather to be **known by God**, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless ^celemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Really, there are only two realities for each of us...either we **do not** know God, or we have **come to know God**.

The argument of Paul in Galatians is that **outside** of the grace of God in Christ, we are **slaves**.

However, **when God saves us**, when we are made alive in Christ, by **faith**, our status as **slaves** is changed to that of **sons**. We are now the children of God.

We now know the **freedom** of God's grace. To put it more simply, **a Christian is someone who knows God**, or is known by God.

Clearly, there was a time when the Galatians did not know God at all. Most of them were **Gentiles**, and thus were **unacquainted** with the God of the Scriptures.

They worshiped **pagan gods** and goddesses. Some of them were into **astrology**. Others worshiped the **ancient deities** of Greece. At Lystra there was a **temple to Zeus**.

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. (1995). (Ga 4:8–20). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

All through Galatia people belonged to the **Roman imperial cult**. None of these deities were really gods at all, they were mere idols. Yet because **demonic influences** were at work, bowing down to **false gods** brought real spiritual bondage.

Such **bondage** is a natural condition of the human experience.

Then, in the **providence of God**, the Galatians came to know God through the **preaching of the gospel** of God's free grace.

In other words, **they became Christians**, for a Christian is simply someone who knows God, not someone who knows ABOUT God, but rather someone who has a relationship with God.

You see, biblical Christianity is not some sort of popular, appealing philosophy, but biblical Christianity is about a **relationship**.

In Scripture, knowledge of God is always **personal**. Christianity is not a matter of **what** we know; it is a matter of **whom** we know.

Maybe an even better way to say this is that Christianity is a matter of who knows us. We may get to know God only because He already knows us—personally—and has revealed Himself to us. Paul clarifies this in **verse 9**:

“But now that **you have come to know God**, or rather to be **known by God**, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless ‘elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?’”

We are known by God. To know God is to be a child of God. And, the initiative for membership in God's family comes entirely from God Himself. Now, we are sons and daughters of God by the initiative of the Father. Why would anyone want to go back to the **status of a slave**?

Why would anyone revert back to **practical paganism**? Why would anyone want to return to the **worthless, elementary principles** of this world?

Apparently, that's exactly what the Galatians were doing. Look at verse 10: “**You observe days and months and seasons and years.**”

Like so many Pharisees, the Galatians were observing the whole Jewish system of special holidays such as the feast of the new moon and festivals such as Passover and Tabernacles. For Paul, this kind of religion was no better than paganism.

Any religion that is based on observing special days is primitive because it **reduces a relationship to a ritual**. We make a grave mistake when we make these things mandatory as a means of justification.

Think about it: there are still far too many people today who think that all they have to do to be good with God is show up at church at Christmas and Easter.

How is Christ formed in us? Simple: by knowing God.

Second, By **RECEIVING** the Word of God (v. 13).

13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that **I preached the gospel** to you the first time;

This verse is packed with key information. **First**, Paul references the occasion which brought him to the Galatians. In the providence of God, some sort of health problem detained Paul on his first missionary visit to Galatia.

We have no idea of knowing the nature of this **malady**. Yet, the Galatians knew exactly what Paul was referencing. Unfortunately, there is no specific mention of the nature of this physical problem even in the book of Acts. Some scholars suggest it was **malaria**. Another possibility is that Paul was believed to have had chronic difficulty with his **eyesight**. This would explain his rather alarming comment in **verse 15**:

“Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have **plucked out your eyes** and given them to me.”

Clearly, this is **hyperbole** to indicate that the Galatians would have done anything to be of help to Paul.

Note, too, that Paul says in **verse 14** that the Galatians did not despise or loathe him because of his bodily condition, but rather “**received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.**”

Literally, they did not **spit** at him, as pagans usually did when they saw someone they thought was disfigured by a demon. So, whatever was going on, however Paul looked as a result of this physical aggravation, they did not reject Paul. They gave him a welcome they would have given to Christ!

Why is that? And, this is where I want to go with this teaching point. This is the **second** bit of key information.

The reason for their warm welcome was not so much that they loved Paul, as it was that they loved God's Word.

They knew Paul was an **apostle**, one **sent by God** with a **message** from the **King**. Therefore, they received his ministry the way God's children should receive their Father's Word...with real joy!

By the way: May I say with all respect and some measure of boldness- the example of the Galatians reminds us that the **primary qualification for the pastor is that he must preach the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2)**.

Too many churches have the **wrong expectations** of their ministers. Please don't judge me on my ability, appearance, personality, popularity or any of the other standards ordinarily used to judge pastors.

Rather, evaluate my ministry based on my **fidelity, faithfulness** to the **Word of God**.

It was the **Scotsman John Brown** who wrote, "Happy is the Christian society when the minister loves his people, and the people love their minister for the **truth's** sake."²

My **greatest pastoral ministry** to you, dear church, is to discharge faithfully my duty to expound the Scriptures.

Unfortunately, the Galatians were beginning to turn against Paul. Their hospitality was turning to hostility. Paul wonders...look at **verse 16**... "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

- ◆ Paul is still preaching the good news of the **cross** and the **empty tomb**.
- ◆ Paul is still preaching justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Yet, the Galatians were **beginning to reject** the one true gospel. Oh, let it never be said of us! Let us always have a mind and heart for the truth of God's Word. Let us always have a receiving spirit for the Word of God!

How is Christ formed in us? Simple: by receiving the Word of God.

Finally, By **BEING** Like Christ (v. 19).

²Ryken, Philip. *Galatians: Reformed Expository Commentary*, p. 174.

Paul writes, “My children, with whom I am again in labor **until Christ is formed in you.**”

One conviction I hold dear is that the more a church receives the Word of God the more that church will start to look like Jesus Christ; the more Christ will be formed in her.

We will start to **think** as He thinks.

We will **love** what He loves.

We will **do** what He does.

We will **suffer** the things He suffers.

The gospel **changes** us.

You see I have zero interest in you becoming like me. I don't want any disciples. The kind of disciples which interest me are **those who follow Jesus.**

Paul wanted the Galatians to **be like Christ**, and he knew that one way for them to learn how to do this was to become like him, insofar as Paul was like Christ.

Remember what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 1:1**: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

Conclusion & Call for Response:

The apostle's ultimate goal was to see Christ take shape in the lives of the people, to see Christ formed in them.

Paul said back in **Galatians 2:20**, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

This ought to be the overarching goal of every pastor: **not the favor of men, but the formation of Christ!**

This will not happen overnight. Yet, the Spirit gradually uses the Word of God to make God's children like God's Son.

How is Christ formed in us?

- ◆ By knowing God
- ◆ By receiving Word of God
- ◆ By being like Christ