



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 4:8-20

"My Children, Persevere in Grace"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Let's turn in our Bibles to Galatians chapter 4, and I want to read as the Scripture reading verse 8 through verse 20; Galatians chapter 4, verse 8 through verse 20. The apostle, you will remember, is expounding the doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the Law. And in the 8th verse, apart from continuing his words to the Galatians concerning whom he is very much upset, he writes,

"Nevertheless then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all."

That 12th verse may be better rendered, I think, "Brethren, I beseech you become as I am, or as I have become. For I have become as ye are." Verse 13,

"Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my trial (Or that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition.) which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously seek you, but not for good (He speaks here about the Judaisers paying court to the Galatians seeking to win them over to them from the Apostle Paul); they zealously seek you, they zealously pay court to you, but not for good; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously sought always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you."

May God bless this reading of his word. We bow together now for a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful for the word of God and as we think of our privilege, we are indeed thankful, not simply for the word, but for the marvelous way in which by Thy divine power Thou hast preserved this word for us. As the apostle has exhorted us to be thankful, we are thankful for the blessings that Thou hast given to us. And for the privilege of being an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word through the Chapel today, through the radio ministry and through the other forms of outreach, and especially in the preaching of the word, and the teaching of the word here, in the ministry of the word meetings, and the Sunday school, and in the Lord's Supper this evening.

We thank Thee for all who, in the body of Christ, are seeking to make our Lord known, and may today, Lord, be a fruitful day for the whole body of Christ scattered over the face of this earth. We thank Thee, too, for other blessings that are ours, for the assurance of Thy presence with us, and especially Lord, we thank Thee for the privilege of prayer and for the privilege of holding up those of the body of Christ who are suffering and in need. And we remember them particularly today. And those who are so familiar to us, who have made their needs known to us, we ask, Lord Thy blessing upon them. May Thy divine strength and power and comfort and encouragement be theirs today.

For those who need healing, we pray for them. We ask, Lord, that in accordance to Thy will, Thou wilt minister to them, and may the result be a deeper appreciation and satisfaction in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray for our elders and for our deacons, for our fellow believers wherever they may be today. May the Lord Jesus Christ be particularly real and significant for all of us. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this meeting. As we sing, may we sing as the apostle has exhorted us, from the heart to the glory of God. And may Thy hand be upon us as the word is studied. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for this morning is, "My Little Children, Persevere in Grace." And we're turning to Galatians chapter 4, and studying together verses 8 through 20. Galatians, Luther's wife is Katie von Bora, as he put it is, "Paul's great epistle of "justification by faith." And in it we learn that our God is not an angry God waiting to hurl thunderbolts of judgment from heaven upon all the children of men. But through the atoning work of Jesus Christ he offers a righteous standing before himself to those who come to him by that same Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to the realization of this a man finds, as Luther himself found, that the gates of paradise are open to him, and forgiveness and acceptance become his possession, not by man's effort, but by the grace of God.

That's the substance of the apostle's message in the Epistle to the Galatians, an epistle that very nearly divides itself into three parts. In the opening two chapters, the apostle defends himself, because he wants to establish the ground upon which he speaks to them. In the next two chapters, he expounds the doctrine of justification by faith, so that while the first two chapters are personal, the next two are doctrinal. And in the last two chapters, he points out the ethical consequences of the teaching that he has been giving. And in a very interesting way, in those last two chapters, which we shall come to very shortly, the apostle points out that instead of being under Law, believers from the time of the cross of Jesus Christ are, through the work that he has accomplished, under the Holy Spirit as their guide. In other words, the Holy Spirit has come to take the place of the Law in the guidance of the individual believer.

The passage that we are looking at this morning is rather unique in one respect. It is a kind of appeal on the part of the apostle to the Galatians that makes it a passage, which illustrates the fact that the apostle had within his own heart an urgent pastoral kind of concern for the Galatians. You rather expect the Apostle Paul to speak in most of his epistles, and particularly in the epistles like Romans and Galatians and 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, in very strongly doctrinal tones, but here in this section, he demonstrates the fact that he has the deepest kind of concern that the Galatians are delivered from the errors of the Judaizers. He does not want them to become victims of the heretics who have come in their midst. Not only of heresy, but of the insincerity of these men, because it is almost always true that people who proclaim false doctrine in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ are individuals who are insincere and unreal in their hearts. But Paul, the great lover of the souls of men, then is before us as one who loves in truth.

The Bible speaks very strongly about love. But we have tended to transform the kind of love that the Bible speaks about into a kind of vacuous sentimentality. But the love that the Bible speaks about is love in the truth. And it is not love if it is not in the truth. And I think you can see that the apostle here will speak some rather sharp words

to the Galatians. But he speaks them in true biblical love. "Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" "After all, the wounds of a friend are faithful, the Bible says, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." And you see the apostle here as a faithful friend wounding the Galatians, but very much concerned over the fact that they are in the process of departing from the truth that he has been seeking to proclaim to them.

The circumstances of the apostle's appeal are given us in verses 9 through 11. In effect he is saying to them, "Why are you dropping out the university of grace, and enrolling again in the kindergarten of the Law?" Listen to him, "Nevertheless, then," or but at that time, "when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods." Now, he refers to the ignorance that characterized them in the past, and we've studied enough of the word of God to know that when the apostle speaks about spiritual ignorance, he is talking about what we have the Noahic effects of sin. Sin affects not only our wills, it not only affects our emotions making our will rebellious toward God, and our emotions corrupt emotions, but it affects our minds. And we have referred from time to time what theologians have called the Noahic effects of sin. That is, the effects of sin that touch our minds. The Apostle Paul writes of them in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 17 and verse 18 when he says, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Notice the words, "Having the understanding darkened the vanity of their mind, the blindness of their heart." Well, that is what Paul is talking about when he says here, "Nevertheless when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods."

I think it's rather interesting that the apostle here, in this 8th verse, when he says, "Nevertheless when ye knew not God," he uses the kind of expression that suggests to us not that they did not know that God existed, the Galatians knew that God existed, but they did not know that God in the sense that the biblical revelation presents him. The

word God does not have the article, and so it is not so much the identity of the being that is in view, but rather the kind of being that they did not know. "Nevertheless when ye knew not God," that is God as he really is.

Now, we know what God really is by virtue of a New Testament revelation and we know that our God is a triune God. That is one of the first things that we should know about our God. We don't worship a God such as the Muslims worship. Or we don't worship a God such as the Unitarians worship. Or we don't worship a God such as the great mass of professing Christianity professes today when it denies the trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The true God is one God who subsists in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. So the apostle says, "Nevertheless when ye knew not God," they knew of a God. They spoke of God. They had many Gods. But as Paul says elsewhere. "There are many gods, but they are not God at all." So he refers then to the Noahidic effects of sin, which while it did not mean that they did not know that a God exists, they did not know the true God. They did not know his being. They did not know is person. They did not know his attributes as presented in the word of God. So they were enslaved to godless gods.

"But now," he says, "after that ye have known God, or rather are known by God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" How can you turn back to the ineffectualness and the poverty of legalism from the power and riches of the grace of God manifested in the Lord Jesus? Now, did you notice the way the apostle puts their knowledge of God? He says, "But now, after that ye have known God," and then as it might suggest to them the fact that they had a part in it, he modifies his own words. He says, "or rather are known by God." In other words, the important thing is not that we have come to know God, but that we have been brought to the place where we have come to know God through God, and through his grace. We have been made to know God by him.

Now, I think that that's important. We want to stop for just a moment and talk about this, "are known by God." And I want to say a few things about it. In the first place, the word that the apostle uses in the 9th verse is different from the word that he used in the 8th verse. In the 8th verse when he says, "Nevertheless when ye knew not God," he uses a term for the knowledge of God, which is knowledge in the reflective sense. But in the 9th verse, when he says, "Ye have come to know God," or "are known by God," he uses a term that refers to experiential knowledge. So the knowledge that he is speaking about is knowledge of experience. They have come through a definite experience to the knowledge of the true God.

But furthermore, when he says, "You have been known by God," or you have come to be known by God, what could that mean? God, of course, known everyone. In what sense could it be said that they have come to be known by God? Well, only in the special saving sense, because he knew of their existence, of course, from eternity passed. But when he says, or rather are known by God, he speaks of God knowing us in the special sense in which we are chosen by him and made his own. Listen to some of the words of holy Scripture in connection with that. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Remember the Lord Jesus said in John chapter 10 in verse 27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Or in the Old Testament in the 18th chapter of the Book of Genesis, when God is speaking just before Abraham's intercession, and we read in verse 17,

"And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

He refers to the Abrahamic covenant, and he says "For I know him." The New American Standard Bible has correctly translated this, "I have chosen him." So to know is to know in the sense of coming to intimate relationship with. Being the word used for sexual intercourse in the Old Testament, it is an effective expression of the most intimate kind of knowledge. So when the Bible speaks about God knowing us, it does not simply mean that he's acquainted with us. It means that he knows us in the sense that he has set his love upon us. And he has entered into the most intimate relationship with us, by virtue of his divine election. So that the Apostle says, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known by God," that is, the knowledge is not only experiential, it's saving knowledge. And then I love this passive voice, because it stresses in the apostle's words the fact that this knowledge that God has of them is not traceable to themselves, it is something that has come from God. You know you can, if you catch the force of this, you catch the force of the sense that the apostle had of the grace of God in the salvation of meant. It's not so much that we have come to know him, as it is that we have been made by God to come to know him. So the words, "or rather are known by God," stress that gracious side.

This text always reminds me of the story of the little boy who was approached by a very zealous Christian worker who said to him, "Have you found Jesus?" He said, "No I didn't know he was lost. [Laughter] But I was lost and he found me." [Laughter] So the apostle says, "You have come to know God, or rather you are known by God." How is it that you are turning against to the weak and beggarly elements?" You know, it would be nice if we had a lengthy period of time, and everybody had nothing to do and we were all bright as possible, and we could just study every word in the epistles that he apostle writes. Because it's not a haphazard expression when he says, "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements." Why does he use the term weak? Well, in using the term weak he simply wants to say that the legalism that the Judaisers are seeking to present to

them has no power to save them. And why is it beggarly? Well, it is beggarly because the legalism has no power to impart an inheritance.

Now he has just been saying in chapter 3, verse 29, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And then in verse 7 of chapter 4 he said, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." It's absolutely inconceivable to the apostle that someone would move away from the grace of God, by which they have been saved and made an heir of God, to legalist things. A legalistic system of salvation introduces by the Judaisers making it necessary to do more than to simply believe in order to be saved. When we have so much through the grace method of salvation. We have been saved, and we have been made an heir of God. "How is it possible," Paul says, "for you to turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

The only explanation for it is the sinfulness of the human heart. That having the greatness of the salvation of God in Christ, we still are tempted to turn aside and seek to have our relationship to God based on merit. Well, it's not surprising then that he says, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." You observed days, and months, and times, and years. I imagine that the Judaisers, this is not distinctly stated, however, and I should qualify my words with that. I imagine that what they Judaisers had done, they had had a little parley before they came to the Galatian Christians, and they said, "Now, these people have been taught the grace of God by the Apostle Paul, and so he said it's not necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved. He said the person is saved by grace through faith." Now they said among themselves, "We don't believe that. We think that's wrong. We think that a person is justified, not only by what Christ has done, but by what we must do too, and we must be circumcised. We must be under the Law of Moses, and we must bring these persons unto the knowledge of circumcision as a necessity for salvation. And we must put them under the Law. But now, if we go right in and we speak directly about circumcision that's liable to upset them. So it would be wiser

for us to speak about the observance of the Sabbath day or the new moon, which they are accustomed to observing, or perhaps of the Passover, or the Feast of the Trumpets or the feast of the Day of Atonement."

And so evidently they had first gone in, and this as I say is my supposition, they had gone in and said, "You should observe the feasts, and you should observe the days. You should observe the Sabbath." And then, after they had fallen for that, then they introduced to them the necessity of circumcision for salvation. So Paul says in the 10th verse, "You are observing days, and months, and times, and years." So they had begun with them, and they were going on to circumcision. That raises the question, of course, shall we observe the Sabbath?

Now, there are Christians and great masses of Christians who believe that you should observe the Sabbath day. It is my opinion that the Bible, when it speaks about the Sabbath day, speaks about Saturday. Saturday was the Sabbath. And it is my opinion that if we say to Christians in the age, in which we live that, "Ye must observe the Sabbath." Then we are in effect saying to them that "You must observe Saturday." Because Saturday was the Sabbath.

Now, the New Testament tells us that when our Lord Jesus rose again from the dead, the apostles began meeting together on the first day of the week. Evidently they met on the first day of the week, because it was the first day of the week that our Lord was raised from the dead, and that he appeared to them in their first gatherings, described for us in John chapter 20. So the Christian church began to meet on the first day of the week. It is not the Sabbath. It is the eighth day, not the seventh day. But let me ask you another question, in the Old Testament, the Israelites were to observe, not only the Sabbath day every week as the weeks rolled by, but they also had a yearly Sabbath which was to be observed every seventh year. And then the land was to lie fallow for an entire year. That was the annual Sabbath.

Now, if we say to people that you must observe the Sabbath day, are we not also obligated to say to them to that "You must observe the Sabbath year?" Because it was just as much a part of the Law of Moses as the weekly Sabbath. I do not think that the New Testament teaches that we should observe the Sabbath day. We observe the Lord's Day as a day in which we meet together, and we fellowship together around the Lord's Table. The church meets and listens to the word of God. The gifted men give expression of the word of God. The priests also worship the Lord, and we meet as a body of Christ on the first day of the week.

Many years ago, when I was a very young preacher. I know you know that must be a long time ago, and it was, because the occasion was a little visit that I paid to Little Rock, Arkansas or Tulsa, Oklahoma, I've forgotten, to preach. And I went down to Union Station here in Dallas and got on a train to travel to either Tulsa or Little Rock. I've forgotten exactly which place I was going to, but I had a Bible with me. And it was a Saturday afternoon, late, about four or five o'clock, and I went into the car and sat down, and my Bible was on the seat by the side of me. And across the way there was a man, who had a briefcase, and he was working with some papers, and he also had a Bible. And during the course of about thirty to forty minutes, I looked at his Bible, and I think he looked at my Bible, and we began to discuss, ultimately, some spiritual things. And after an opening word or two about our faith in Christ, I asked him what he was doing. And he said, "Well, I am the representative for this area, the southwester area, of the Seventh Day Adventist Church."

And that launched us into quite a discussion, and I quizzed him about some of his beliefs, and he was a very nice man, and I think a genuine Christian man. Because I began by asking him specifically in what was his trust. And he said, "Well, my trust is in Jesus Christ." I said, "You are not trusting in anything else other than Jesus Christ?" And he said yes, he was not trusting in anything else than Jesus Christ. Well, having established that, we talked about the Sabbath day. And I explained to him why I thought

that we should not observe the Sabbath day. And then finally, in the course of our conversation, I asked him, "How could it possibly be said that we should observe the Sabbath day in the light of Colossians 2:16." And he looked a little puzzled. And he said, "What?" And I said, "Colossians 2:16" And he said, "I'm afraid I don't know that text." And so I turned in his own Bible to that text. And it says, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath day."

And he said, "I must confess, that's the first time that I have looked at that text." Now, he was the southwestern director of the Seventh Day Adventist church, which meets on Saturday believing that they should observe the Sabbath Day. It was a rather interesting experience, and afterwards we did make some contact. He was a Christian man. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Now, the apostle turns from argument to appeal. He says in the 12th verse, "Brethren, I beseech you, become as I have become; for I have become as you are: you have not injured me at all." What he means by this is, "You become as I have become. That is a person not under Law, because I have become as you Gentiles are, people who are not under the Law. You have not injured me by the things that you have done, I'm just appealing to you to drop the legal system. Become as I have become, because I have become as you are."

Then he turns to the past and reminds them of some of the things that have happened when he first preached the gospel to them. "You know how that on account of infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at the first." There's been a great deal of discussion over what the apostle means by "on account of infirmity of the flesh." What does he mean? Some have said, perhaps the apostle caught malaria, because before he preached to the churches in Asia Minor, in southern Asia Minor, he had to pass

through the malaria infested swamps of southern Pamphylia. But there is no other indication that that was what the apostle had.

Some have suggested epilepsy, because epilepsy does produce some unpleasant manifestations. And the apostle says in verse 14, "And my trial, which was in my flesh." And he speaks of the trial as being a trial to them, "and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition." But again, there is no indication that the apostle has in mind epilepsy. The great mass of the interpreters of the New Testament have suggested that while there is no definite proof of this, the apostle probably has in mind some kind of chronic ophthalmia or a chronic eye disease. That would make it possible for him to preach, and at the same time to be sick.

And also since certain kinds of eye diseases can be unpleasant for others to observe, it might well be that the apostle was afflicted with chronic ophthalmia. He does say in the 15th verse, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." And then in the 6th chapter in the 11th verse he says, "You see with what large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand." Which seems to suggest that the apostle did have some eye difficulties, which meant that he wrought with a scrawling, sprawling hand when he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians; he wrote it with his own hand, even though it was quite a trial for him to do it. And then you also remember that he appeared before one of the high priests, and he slapped the high priest. And he said afterwards, "I didn't know that he was the high priest." And it may very well have been that the reason for it was that the apostle had a form of ophthalmia.

At any rate, he says with reference to his disease, that his trial which was in his flesh, "You didn't despise, and you didn't spit out at it. You didn't reject it, but received me as an angel of God." And then in the 15th verse, he says, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" Now, that is a very important passage, and I want you to look carefully at it, and I want to make just one slight change in order to bring out more fully

what the apostle is saying. He's asking them a very important question. He says, "Where then is your formerly happy state." Let's stop for a moment and analyze that. What does Paul mean when he says, "Where is then your former happy state?" What caused therefore my happy state? Why their former happy state was caused by the fact that they responded to the doctrines of the grace of God in Christ. That's what brought them their former happy state.

Now Paul says, "Your former happy state has vanished. Where is your former happy state?" Well, what has caused their former happy state to vanish? It's very simple, legalism. That is the doctrine to which they have fallen prey. We are not justified by the grace of God in Jesus Christ apart from the works of the Law, but we must add to it circumcision. Or to translate it into our modern times, we must add to it baptism, observing the Lord's Supper, joining the church, whatever it might be. The effect of legalism is always to destroy the joy of the Lord.

Now legalism is contrary to the word of God and that, of course, is the first way that we should judge it. It leads to pride. It leads to arrogance, because it leads to the opinion that we are justified before God by something that we do. Now, its greatest error is the fact that it makes the cross unnecessary, because if we can be justified by what we do, then it is not necessary for Christ to die. But legalism destroys the joy of the Lord. You will never see a happy legalist. They are never happy. They are always bound up in pride and arrogance. And they're sour in the fact, ultimately, that they cannot measure up to their own standard because no one can justify himself before God by the things that he does. But worst of all, in this context, it destroys the joy of the Lord. Do you know what this means really, ultimately, in the general sense? Why, it means simply this, that right doctrine brings happiness and joy in the Lord. Wrong doctrine means that happiness and joy in the Lord vanishes. That's why it's so important to have right doctrine, for when we think right, then it is expressed in the Christian life in its naturally joyful issue.

Now, of course, there are different types of devilish doctrine. There is the blatant denial of salvation truth. There is the addition to truth, in which the shading of difference between truth and error becomes rather difficult. And then there is confusion of truth, in which we have a formed, even among Christians, of sanctification by good works. There are many, many Christians who are bound up in the doctrine of sanctification by works, and when we are in that kind of system, we inevitably cannot have the joy of the Lord. We hear a lot of talk today about depression. People often speak about depression. One of the sources of depression, the ultimate source, is unbelief. But one of the sources of depression is false doctrine, false doctrine. "Where is then the blessedness, their former happy state that you enjoyed?" It's gone, because of false doctrine.

I guess you could call Christian today elevator Christians or as a friend of mine calls them tennis ball Christians, because they're bouncing up and down all the time. Spirituality by a personality imitation, we are spiritual if we dress the way other Christians dress; or if we use the expressions that other Christians use, "hallelujah Lord;" if our facial expressions conform to what evangelicals ought to be, or we have spirituality by tabooism, the various types of things that we can do and cannot do, which are not necessarily set forth in the word of God. Spirituality by relativism, and various other types of things, which are really confusions of the truth of God. The Bible teaches that we are justified by grace through faith, and that we are sanctified by grace through faith, by the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians. And the man, who has the doctrines of the word of God in his possession, in his mind, and in his heart, is the truly happy man. For that man is a man resting upon the word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, the apostle concludes the section; we have just a few moments, by speaking to them concerning the cause of this plea that he is giving to them. "Am I then become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" "Apostolic authority doesn't begin to cease when I begin to teach unpopular things?" We should not throw aside the things of the word of God, which we don't like simply because we don't like them. I quoted earlier,

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Much better to have the word of God, and much better to have the man of God speak plainly and directly to us in ways that bring conviction to us, than to have him speak deceitfully to us as if everything is all right. "Have I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? These men zealously seek you, but not for good; they want you for their own disciples. They want to take you away from the apostolic truth that I have brought you." It's one of the marks of the false teacher, he always tries to attract others converts to himself. He courts them. He seeks to win them to himself. He does not have any converts of his own through the preaching of the message. He seeks to gather others to himself so that they will listen to him. One of the things about the apostle that is so amazing is that, occasionally, in the case of some of these men were Christians, but nevertheless sought to take Paul's disciples away from them, he said, "I still am happy that the gospel is being preached, but the Judaisers, that's a different matter entirely."

And the passage concludes with a very strong expression on the part of the apostle that they grow in the knowledge of the Lord. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Here is Paul, the picture of the pastoral mother, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." I wish I had time to speak about the sense of that verb, but let me translate it this way, "My little children of whom I travail in birth, until you take on the form of Christ." So what has begun in them, they are pregnant in our Lord, he desires to see ultimately come to it full manifestation in the beautiful union with Christ that is intended by God when he brings us to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus." So here then we have Paul the pastor mother.

Incidentally, you'll notice the apostle is not interested, as so many people are today, in building himself into them. We often hear people say today, and this is very common in Christians who are talking about discipleship. "I want to have someone into whom I can build myself." The apostle would not have responded very well to that kind

of talk. He doesn't like the idea of building ourselves into anyone. John Calvin put it very beautifully four hundred years ago he said, "If ministers wish to do any good, let them labor to form Christ, not to form themselves in their hearers." The aim of a Christian disciple is not to build into someone else's life something from himself, but the aim of the true Christian with the true pastoral spirit, the true shepherd heart is to build Christ into the hearts of his listeners with the apostolic message. The apostle is dominated by the demands of the truth, it's not technique, it's not the mannerisms, it's not the style, it's what does the Scripture say? The apostolic message is the touch stone of all of the truth, and if in Believers Chapel we could ever have as our one dominating, I'm lost for the proper word, but in this group of believers the one thing that should grip us is, is it true to the apostolic message? We should be true then to the Apostle Paul. May God give us to have that sense of the significance and importance of the truth of the word of God.

If you're here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you that the Son of God came from heaven, offered himself up on a cross as a sacrifice for sinners. And if through the Holy Spirit's ministry you have been brought to the conviction of your own sin and condemnation, you are a candidate for his salvation. And may God so work in your heart that you flee from trust in anything that is human, for vain is the help of man, and flee to the cross of Jesus Christ which is sufficient for life now and forever. We invite you to come to him. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words from the apostle, which reveal to us the deep feeling that he had with relation to his Galatian converts who were in danger of being entrapped in false teaching. And oh God, may the happiness and blessedness of the relationship that we have enjoyed with Thee never depart as the embracing of false teaching. We thank Thee for the grace of God upon which we stand, that we have no other means of acceptance with Thee than the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross.

“My Children, Persevere in Grace” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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And we pray that the grace of God, which has brought us to the knowledge of our great God, may work in our lives to the formation of Christ within us, until that day when we see him face to face. And for those, Lord, in this audience who may not yet know him, O God, our prayer is that Christ may be formed in them to their salvation and sanctification. For Jesus' sake. Amen.