

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians

Laboring Until Christ is Formed in You

Galatians 4:19

1. The Picture of Sanctification

Paul tells the Galatians that he is engaged in agonizing work with them with the goal that Christ is formed in them. This is a description of his goal for their sanctification. Paul uses the language of formation into the image of Christ is used to describe what will occur in the life of the one who has put his or her faith in Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph 4:10-16).

2. The Power of Sanctification

There is no work which man can do in order to be justified before God, and any attempt to do so incurs the condemnation of God (Gal. 1:6). We are to actively work in the process of our sanctification even though all of the power and credit for our sanctification belongs solely to God (Phil. 2:12-13). God has chosen to use His Word as the primary vehicle for achieving this change in us (John 17:17; Col. 1:27; 2 Cor. 3:18; cf. Col. 3:9-11; Rom. 12:2).

3. The Process of Sanctification

Whereas justification is instantaneous, sanctification is an ongoing process in the life of a believer who is motivated by the return of Christ (1 John 3:2-3) and the fear of the Lord (2 Cor 7:1). This process is variously described as putting off of those behaviors and desire which characterize the unbeliever and by putting on the things which characterize God's holy character (Eph. 4:20-24). The Christian is to be sober minded and singular in devotion to the Lord as a slave to his master (Rom. 6:19-23). Sanctification is not merely a refraining from wickedness, but an earnest desire to do what is right (Ti. 2:14). One of the ways in which sanctification is manifested is in the love of the brethren (1 Thess. 3:12-13; cf. 1 John 4:20).