

March 22, 2015  
COR@9  
Gal 4:8-20  
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Introduction—St. Nicholas at Nicaea

A. What drives Paul's fiery rhetoric in this letter is not that some people had corrupted or confused right doctrine, but that these people who he loved were in spiritual jeopardy.

B. "All real theology is pastoral theology"—there are no truths about God that don't have practical ramifications for his people.

I. Paul's personal appeal (vv. 12-16)

A. The Galatians had not accepted Paul because of his personal impressiveness or rhetorical skill, but because they recognized that his gospel was genuine (vv. 14-16).

B. Paul appeals to their love for him (vv. 14-15).

II. Two (mixed) metaphors (v. 19)

A. Paul as the Galatians' spiritual father

1. This language suggests not just parenthood, but labor pains. Paul is a mother in the throes of labor.

2. Parent-child language in Scripture is often used as a metaphor for God's love for his children (Deut 32; Mt 23:37), and for spiritual parents and their children (1 Jn 2:1, etc.; 3 Jn 4).

3. This also corresponds to the metaphor Paul has been using in Galatians of slavery and sonship.

B. The Galatians giving birth to Christ

1. Now Jesus is a fetus being formed inside the Galatians.

2. Paul wants to avoid a spiritual miscarriage.

Discussion questions

1. Paul commends the Galatians for accepting him "as an angel of God," despite his own weakness. Now he suffers greatly (he compares it to giving birth) on their behalf. What can Paul teach us about ministry in these verses? Who have you own spiritual parents been?

2. Think about Paul's metaphor of Christ being formed as an embryo in us. What are some of the ramifications of this image? What other places in Scripture come to mind? The selection from Spangenberg's *Postilla* below might help get you started.

Q: Must then Christ be born in us?

A: We must all become spiritual mothers of Christ, in order to do the Father's will; we must participate with him in his kingdom.

Q: How do we come to give such birth?

A: We too must be Mary, betrothed to Christ through faith, believing the angel—that is, the preacher of the gospel—and zealously clinging to the divine words, directing our life accordingly and thus always seeking God's will.

—Johann Spangenberg, *Postilla Teütsch* on Luke 2 (a question and answer postil to prepare children for Sunday readings, 1547)