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Sermon Notes

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## **Painful Gospel Ministry Displayed: “Till Christ is Formed in You”**

**Galatians 4:12-20**

Introduction:

True gospel ministry can be a very painful thing. Again and again, the wandering ways of the people of God have caused agony and anguish for the spiritual shepherds God set over them. The wayward ways of the nation of Israel during the Exodus were a constant trial to Moses. The constant drift of Israel into paganism and idolatry brought anguish to one prophet after another: Elijah pleaded with Israel to make a choice between Baal and the Lord; Isaiah poured out his soul in powerful and poetic words to expose the sins of Israel and Judah; Jeremiah wept and suffered and was persecuted because of the final stages of the apostasy of Judah before the exile to Babylon...

What consistently brought grief and anguish to these godly leaders was the constant DRIFT of God’s people into spiritual decay... their incessant tendency to wander away from God:

“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it... prone to leave the God I love!”

So Jeremiah spoke the anguish of the Lord

***Jeremiah 2:2-5 "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown. <sup>3</sup> Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them," declares the LORD. <sup>4</sup> ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, all you clans of the house of Israel. <sup>5</sup> This is what the LORD says: "What fault did your fathers find in me, that they strayed so far from me? They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.***

So also Hosea:

***Hosea 6:4 What am I going to do with you, Ephraim? What am I going to do with you, Judah? Your loyalty is like the morning mist and like the early dew that vanishes.***

So also Jesus Christ... in Revelation 2

**[to the hardworking, doctrinally sound church of Ephesus] *Revelation 2:4 But I have this against you: you have abandoned the love you had at first.***

The pain of ministry is in the need for constantly shepherding the endlessly drifting hearts of the people of God. This is clearly on display in Galatians 4:12-20.

For the last two chapters in Galatians, the Apostle Paul has, for the most part, carried himself like a detached dispenser of truth. He has made a powerful and complex historical and Scriptural argument for the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He has showed them their own experience with the gospel, how they received the gift of the Spirit by hearing the gospel message by faith, not because they followed the Law (Galatians 3:1-5). He then turned to the Scriptures to show that Abraham was justified by faith (Galatians 3:6) and that he is both an example of salvation to all uncircumcised Gentiles AND the source by which the Savior, Jesus Christ, would come. He displayed the two ways to live in the Old Testament: by faith (“The righteous will live by faith” in Habakkuk 2:14) or by Law (“The man who does this things will live by them” Leviticus 18:5). But Paul makes it plain: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Law” (Deuteronomy 27:26)

He laid out the glorious good news of the Gospel: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us... and He did it in order to give us the blessing of the Spirit-filled life! By the Holy Spirit living within us we can live a godly life, a life of freedom from sin and from condemnation. He made it plain that the sending of the Spirit of God into our hearts, the Spirit who cries “Abba, Father” has come by grace through faith in Christ, not by law!

He has made his case as a theologian, a clear-headed lawyer, a skillful logician... it is absolutely convincing mentally and intellectually...

But now, he moves to a very passionate appeal... he is emotional, pleading with them as though they were his little children who are going astray.

He reveals one of the most painful aspects of gospel ministry: the tendency Christians have to drift away from Christ, away from sound doctrine, away from godly living. People in a church can be doing very well in January, and very poorly in February. God has raised up elders, shepherds of the flock, to bring the people of God back in repentance when that happens... and it is a PAINFUL THING!!

A Puritan writer said that the work of a pastor is unlike that of other craftsmen. What other craftsmen make goes steadily, step by step, toward completion. A cabinetmaker working on a cabinet sees his work move toward the final goal with steady progress. So also a silversmith or a carpenter or a potter. Everything the craftsman does skillfully is one more step toward the finished product. When the cabinetmaker lays down his tools at the end of the day and goes home, he knows that, the next morning, he can pick up that project where he left it off and continue on. Not so the pastor. Everything that gets built up in the hearts and souls of the people he’s teaching is under constant attack by the world, the flesh, and the devil... and when the pastor lays down his tools after working

on the hearts of the people (maybe preaching a sermon) he goes home knowing that, overnight, the devil will be assaulting those truths and undermining his work so that the people will be constantly pulled down and his work undone. It's like the cabinetmaker coming in the next day to finish the cabinet, and finds that the doors he skillfully carved with a floral design have been sanded flat and he's starting that part all over again.

We see that in Paul here... expressing ANGUISH over what is going on in the souls of the Galatian Christians he led to faith in Christ and discipled. In these passionate verses, we can see some timeless elements of gospel ministry... and we will be strengthened by studying them.

There is a powerful rhythm in these verses as Paul moves back and forth between HOW IT WAS THEN... and HOW IT IS NOW

Then: you loved me, we shared fellowship together, you delighted in the truths I was teaching you, you cared for me in my illness, you had a tremendous amount of JOY in your new Christian life, your new life of freedom from sin... that's how it WAS

But NOW: you are suspicious of me, you doubt me, question by doctrine and my motives, reject my authority... you are listening to false teachers who are flattering you so that you will flatter them... it's like we're ENEMIES NOW

WHY????????????????? What have I done? All I did was tell you the truth!!

***Galatians 4:16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?***

We will trace out these passionate verses... they do not come to us as some logical argument, step by step... but rather, their emotional nature makes the truth flow out in a jumble. To extract principles of gospel ministry and highlight them requires some unravelling, and not taking the verses in the strict order in which they're given.

## I. The Goal of Gospel Ministry: "Until Christ is Formed in You"

***Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...***

A. Overarching Goal of Gospel Ministry: Total Conformity to Christ

1. Natural state: sinners are dead in their transgressions and sins...

***Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.***

2. Paul says the same here... you were SLAVES... now you are FREE, and BELOVED SONS and DAUGHTERS

***Galatians 4:7-8*** *So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.* <sup>8</sup> ¶ *Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.*

3. Paul came to Galatia to preach the gospel, having been rejected in other places, persecuted in other places... suffering greatly... the FIRST anguish of childbirth was in simply persevering in the gospel ministry in the face of such strong opposition in other places
4. Furthermore, Paul says it was because of an illness that he first came there to preach...

***Galatians 4:13*** *As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.*

5. These things could have caused Paul to give up in the preaching of the gospel; instead, he soldiered on and got an amazing result... the Galatians HEARD, BELIEVED and a church was planted!! But that was the first time... he was in the pains of childbirth now a second time
6. Goal: CHRIST FORMED IN THEM

***Romans 8:29*** *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

This is the goal of salvation: total conformity in every way to Christ; and Christ is

***Hebrews 1:3*** *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*

We were created in the IMAGE OF GOD... sin marred that image terribly; Salvation consists in a total restoration of that IN CHRIST!! Conformed to Christ in every way... first INTERNALLY

***Ephesians 4:24*** *put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Then even physically, in the resurrection from the dead

***Philippians 3:10-11*** *becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

***1 Corinthians 15:49*** *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*

Christ FORMED IN YOU...

We would add that this is the INNER WORKING of the Holy Spirit... a radical change of a person from the inside out

## B. Ongoing Shepherding Needed Because Salvation Comes in Stages

1. Justification is just the beginning of the Christian life
2. Now Paul must be in the ANGUISH of childbirth until CHRIST IS FORMED IN THEM
3. Because they have regressed in their sanctification, Paul has to go back to basics with them as though they need to be born again... AGAIN
4. And that is of the essence of pastoral ministry... shepherding people step by step UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU

***Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:***

- a. Loving what Christ loves and hating what Christ hates
- b. Desiring what Christ desires
- c. Choosing what Christ would choose and rejecting what Christ would reject
- d. Thinking the thoughts Christ would think
- e. Feeling the emotions that Christ would feel

UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU...

Okay... but HOW does this happen?

## II. The Method of Gospel Ministry: Speaking and Living the Truth

***Galatians 4:12 I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you.***

- A. The Combination of Words and Actions So Clearly Displayed
  1. Pleading... speaking the words of true doctrine with great passion
  2. Become like me = follow my example of daily life in the gospel

***1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.***

***Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.***

- B. Teaching on Display in Galatians
  1. Already seen up to this point... strong emphasis on teaching the truth
  2. Also on display in this passage

***Galatians 4:16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?***

3. The truth = doctrinal truth, spoken passionately and powerfully; ALSO, true assessment of how the people are living

***Galatians 2:14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all...***

4. Willingness to speak the truth even if it hurts
5. This is of the essence of true gospel ministry... telling the people the truth
6. In the Old Testament, God consistently raised up prophets who told the truth to Israel even though it was usually really bad news

Martin Luther: "Always preach in such a way that when you are done, people will either hate you or hate their sins."

7. Truly wise people want to hear the truth; fools look for candy-coated lies

***Psalms 141:5 Let a righteous man strike me-- it is a kindness; let him rebuke me-- it is oil on my head.***

***Proverbs 9:8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.***

***Proverbs 25:12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.***

8. The yearning of some people for candy-coated lies

***1 Kings 22:7-8 Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?"<sup>8</sup> The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah."***

***Isaiah 30:9-11 These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD's instruction.<sup>10</sup> They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions.<sup>11</sup> Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"***

C. Role Modeling Here

***Galatians 4:12 I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you.***

1. Paul also presents consistently the value of role modelling in ministry

2. Some things are best learned BY EXAMPLE

***1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.***

***Philippians 3:17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.***

***Philippians 4:9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.***

3. Paul pleads with the Galatians to follow his example out of the depths of Jewish legalism into the free air of the true gospel
4. He “became like them” in order to win them to Christ; he now wants them to become like him in trusting Christ

### III. The Matrix of Gospel Ministry: Loving Relationship

A. All That Speaking and Living is Done in the Matrix of Loving, Committed Relationship

***Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.***

1. Jesus drew His followers into intimate relationship with Himself, and then with each other

***John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.***

2. so Paul sought to do in the churches he planted... it was truth in the context of committed, loving relationship

B. Paul Goes Over the History of their Relationship

***Galatians 4:12-16 I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. <sup>13</sup> As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. <sup>14</sup> Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. <sup>15</sup> What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>16</sup> Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?***

1. Paul clearly LOVES the Galatian Christians! He calls them “Brothers” and shows how much he cherishes them

2. He PLEADS with them... it is a PASSIONATE APPEAL... not dry disinterested doctrine... truth in the context of a loving, committed relationship
3. He says “Become like me, for I became like you...”
  - a. He cared enough about them to change aspects of his lifestyle and dress, eating and behavior so he could win them to Christ

***1 Corinthians 9:21-22 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law ... so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.***

4. Paul speaks of his illness
  - a. He reminds them that it was because of an illness that he first came to preach the gospel to them
  - b. This shows how God can use SUFFERING to advance the gospel... God moves the pieces on the chess board as He thinks best; the implication is that, if Paul hadn't been sick, he would never have come specifically to them to preach the gospel; God used Paul's illness to shape His ministry strategy
  - c. But Paul especially focuses on the RELATIONSHIP he had in those days with the Galatian Christians
  - d. He acknowledges his illness was a TRIAL to them; they had to care for him while he was sick; they were TEMPTED to despise him, to scorn him; to shrink back from him in his hour of need; the Greek word for scorn there in verse 14 is related to SPITTING... like spitting in disgust; Paul says they DIDN'T treat him with contempt or scorn

January-February, 1621:

William Bradford:

102 pilgrims in Plimoth Colony were struggling to survive; dead of winter, 2 or 3 died day by day; at the end of three months' time, half their number were dead; during that time, at any moment, no more than 6 or 7 were healthy enough to care for all the rest; “who, to their great commendations be it spoken, spared no pains, night or day, but with abundance of toil and hazard of their own health, fetched them wood, made them fires, dressed [prepared] them meat, made their beds, washed their loathsome clothes, clothed and unclothed them; in a word, did all the homely and necessary offices for them which dainty and queasy stomachs cannot endure to hear named; and all this willingly and cheerfully, without any grudging in the least, showing herein their true love unto their friends and brethren. A rare example and worthy to be remembered.”

So it was with these Galatians when Paul appeared to their community sick and needing care

They DID NOT DESPISE OR REJECT HIM...

e. INSTEAD, they welcomed him as if he were an angel of God... as if he were JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF

i) This is clearly related to the message Paul preached

ii) His illness (whatever it was) didn't so hinder Paul that he was completely unable to preach or teach

iii) The Galatians' joy in the message was so overwhelming that they treated the messenger as if he were sent straight from God

***2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.***

iv) That was a RICH EXPRESSION of their faith in Christ... a mutual love they had for each other in the gospel

5. But NOW... all that was GONE!!!

***Galatians 4:15 What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.***

a. They had incredibly JOY in their new relationship with Christ

b. That joy overflowed in loving service to Paul as an honored messenger from the Lord

c. But now, WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ALL YOUR JOY?

6. Key issue: JOY is a great barometer of spiritual health... the canary in the coal mine

Illus. Canary in a Coal Mine... a fragile bird in a cage, an early warning system of trouble with the air in the tunnels; lightweight bird very sensitive to methane gas or to carbon monoxide, which is odorless and colorless

If the tiny yellow bird was singing happily on its perch, all was well; But if the bird began to sway and swoon, stagger and fall, they knew there was great danger

Joy is the fragile early warning system of our service to Christ

a. But with this NEW DOCTRINE of legalism, their joy is GONE

b. Legalism SUCKS THE JOY out of the Christian life

- c. Not only are they no longer joy-filled toward Paul, but they were in constant squabbling with themselves

***Galatians 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.***

- d. Joy is given by the HOLY SPIRIT... and they had turned away from the Spirit-filled life; the joy of their salvation was GONE

7. Aside: The nature of Paul's illness

- a. Odd comment:

***Galatians 4:15 I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.***

- b. Possibly it was just an expression: Like a traveler saying "I'd give my right arm to be home for Christmas!"
- c. But it is also possible that Paul suffered from residual effects of the initial blindness he had when he came to Christ, and did for the rest of his life

***Acts 9:8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.***

***Acts 9:18 something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again.***

***Galatians 6:11 See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!***

***2 Corinthians 12:7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.***

C. Willingness to Tell the Truth Even If It Hurts

- 1. But now... everything had changed!!

***Galatians 4:16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?***

- 2. This is so tragic and yet, such a powerful display of what love in the ministry really means
- 3. Paul was willing to speak strongly, even harshly to them to wake them up to the danger of combining the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Law of Moses

***Galatians 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--<sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all.***

***Galatians 3:1-4*** *You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. <sup>2</sup> I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? <sup>4</sup> Have you suffered so much for nothing-- if it really was for nothing?*

4. We love the preacher... if he says what we want!!

***2 Timothy 4:3*** *or the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.*

5. This is exactly how the Judaizers were... flattering the Galatians to win them over

***Galatians 4:17-18*** *Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them. <sup>18</sup> It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.*

- a. The Judaizers talk like they really care about you, but they really only care about themselves
- b. Literally, they were fawning over the Galatians and flattering them so that the Galatians would fawn over the leaders and flatter them in return...
- c. Legalism leads to a mutual admiration society... but it is all based on human achievement and human pride
- d. Paul is even more zealous for the Galatians, BUT for their good... so much so that he's willing to be misunderstood and even disliked for a while
- e. Paul rejected the use of flattery... instead, he SPOKE THE TRUTH IN LOVE

***Romans 16:18*** *For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*

- f. Paul was a genuine friend and leader to the Galatians... but the Judaizers were like many cult leaders—feeding on the esteem of others, yearning for them to praise them
- g. Paul got his praise from Christ

***Galatians 1:10*** *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

#### IV. The Anguish of Gospel Ministry: Spiritual Drift

***Galatians 4:19-20 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, <sup>20</sup> how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!***

##### A. Paul Reveals His Anguish Here Fully at the End

1. Truly loving someone means you are able to be hurt deeply by them
2. Paul is deeply hurt by the personal rejection... but even more by what it all means for them!

##### B. Speaks Almost Like a Mother

***1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. <sup>8</sup> We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.***

A woman in labor is filled with anguish at the process of bringing life into the world

In a similar way, Paul feels the Paul of wrestling with the Galatians until Christ is formed in them

It is VERY PAINFUL work for him

##### C. Uses Term of Endearment

1. Paul calls them “my little children”
2. Greek is a diminutive term used figuratively to reflect tender affection

##### D. In Labor Again

1. It is UNNATURAL to have to go through this again
2. He has already struggled to get them the gospel
3. Now to have to “give birth” to them a second time is deeply distressing
4. The Goal: TOTAL CONFORMITY TO CHRIST... “Until Christ is formed in you”

***Colossians 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.***

***2 Corinthians 3:18 We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.***

E. Paul's Anguish: The Spiritual Drift of the Galatians

***Galatians 4:20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!***

1. Paul says effectively he is at his wit's end...
2. He doesn't know what else to do to help these Galatians who are so dear to him
3. He is writing this letter because he can't be with them... but he deeply wishes he could
4. It has been incredibly painful for him to hear of their defection... their spiritual drift

***Galatians 1:6-7 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- <sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all.***

***Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.***

***Hebrews 2:1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.***

***2 Corinthians 11:28-29 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?***

## V. Application

A. Has Christ Been Formed in You? [Come to Christ!!]

B. Elders: Embrace this Kind of Suffering in Shepherding the Flock

1. Understand that the flock will need to be overseen till the Lord returns... this is an Infinite Internal Journey... the goal is that CHRIST WOULD BE FORMED IN EACH MEMBER
2. Embrace the responsibility each of you has to speak the truth in love... even if it's unpopular for a time... be willing to be a genuine shepherd, not a flatterer; be willing to be seen as someone's enemy just because you told the truth

3. Develop a heart of compassion and be willing to pray deeply for the wandering sheep of the flock
4. Be willing to make the difficult phone call, have the difficult meeting, speak the tender and loving but difficult words

#### C. Yearn and Pray for This Kind of Ministry by Your Elders

1. Yearn that Christ be formed in each member of this church
2. Don't be offended at an elder ministry that DOES tell the truth...

***Galatians 4:16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?***

In Proverbs, a great deal of the wisdom of the wise is being willing humbly to accept criticism

***Proverbs 9:8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.***

***Proverbs 15:31-32 He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise. <sup>32</sup> He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.***

***Proverbs 25:12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.***

3. Cherish a body of Elders who is willing to grieve over the wandering sheep of the flock; pray for them!! Ask God to protect this kind of ministry at FBC

#### D. Watch Over One Another in Brotherly Love

1. One of the greatest responsibilities we have as Covenant Members of FBC is MUTUAL SHEPHERDING...
2. Our church covenant makes it very plain the commitment we should have to one another
  - a. "We will watch over one another in brotherly love"
3. It is a terrible grief to the elders to see people drift away from Christ
  - a. We know that every member of our church is assaulted daily by the world, the flesh and the devil
  - b. We know that Satan does not want FBC to be a healthy church, witnessing to the glory of the risen Christ year after year
  - c. We also know that Satan doesn't want any one of us to thrive spiritually

***John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***

4. Elders ARE called on to watch over the flock... as we just said
5. But each member has a similar responsibility to watch over each other as well... and in many cases, individual members can do a far better job
6. Look at the aspects of shepherding here... and commit yourself to them for members of this flock
  - a. Embrace the GOAL of Gospel Ministry: “Until Christ is formed in you...”
  - b. Understand HOW this Happens... the METHOD: speaking the truth in love and living out the truth of the gospel
  - c. Immerse yourself in the matrix of gospel ministry: committed love relationships in the Body of Christ
  - d. Be willing to feel the anguish of a brother or sister DRIFTING AWAY from Christ
7. Specific actions:
  - a. Pray through the church member list regularly... monthly
  - b. As you do, ask the Lord to reveal to you people that may be drifting away from FBC or from a healthy walk with the Lord
    - i) Have their attendance patterns changed? You don’t see them as much on Sunday morning or at Home Fellowships?
    - ii) Home Fellowships: are they “taking a year off”? Why??
    - iii) Bible for Life: did they used to attend BFL, and now they don’t come any more
  - c. Perhaps their attendance is fine, but you know they are going through major trials in their lives
    - i) Perhaps it’s a serious illness... or a job situation... or some other trial
    - ii) Perhaps they just tell you that they are struggling to have Quiet Times
    - iii) Or maybe they just seem down and discouraged
  - d. Pray for a heart of compassion for drifting people... ask God to make you willing to “be in childbirth until Christ is formed in someone”

8. Another aspect is to involve yourself in committed discipleship relationships
  - a. Men with men; women with women
  - b. More mature Christians taking responsibility for less mature ones
  - c. Or even two equal partners, helping each other to grow