

# *Insights into Fullness of Life in Christ*

## *4..... "Until Christ is formed in you"*

So far in this series of studies, we have looked at how the mystery in the N.T. that Paul highlights is (after regeneration) the starting point for the believer's walk with the Spirit of God in faith. There was and is the need to understand this mystery and why Paul was intent on preaching it, but also to see how living out of this mystery is the way in which we can have fullness of life in Christ.

Secondly we saw how Jesus Himself taught this mystery (although not expressed exactly in these words) when He was praying to the Father in John 17. He taught that just as He was in the Father and the Father was in Him, He also would be in believers and that believers would be united with each other through His Spirit.

Thirdly, the challenge then came through the study, "How then shall we live?" This study was broad in scope, taking into account the basics of the Christian walk and the fundamental Biblical principles that life springs out of death and that we only receive from God according to our faith. We also looked at the issues of real commitment to God and the importance of putting Him first amongst all else. The negatives that inhibit the Christian walk were then examined, among them being legalism and idolatry. We then looked at what Paul actually did in relation to the commission God gave him – which was that Paul was made a minister to preach the word of God....the mystery....which is Christ in you.

Unless we know these things and have that knowledge of them result in the guidance of the Spirit of God in daily life, it is very difficult to see how we can ever expect to live as Christ intended and to fulfill the great commission.

This unit of study picks up on that same theme with an example of Paul's teaching which explicitly deals with the life of Christ within and how he used to labour in prayer for others until this life of Jesus was formed in them, as it was in Him. The particular verse is in Galatians 4:19 which says. *"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, - how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!"*

Notice the words, *"until Christ is formed in you."* Christ formed in us? Yes, that is an explicit statement that says that the life of Christ can be in us. Not only that, but that this forming is a process that occurs over time and in response to prayer, all after the regeneration of the believer.

Can you see the wonder of that? Read on and listen to the Spirit of God as you do.

Ken Walker May 2008

No.	Thematic Pt	Development of point	Illustrations and linkages
1	<p><b><i>OT example of lack of knowledge.</i></b></p> <p><b>Knowledge we need for today</b></p>	<p><b><i>At one point in Israel's history, (at the time of Hosea – 8<sup>th</sup> century BC) God said that His people lacked knowledge – and because of that were being destroyed. Israel was outwardly prosperous, but inwardly they were corrupt – their lives were empty. Hosea told the people of their sin, that judgment was coming, but that God's still loved them.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>As an example of the importance of knowledge, we are going to firstly look at this lack (of knowledge) from the OT.</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Later, we will be touching on two aspects of knowledge, both intellectual (mind based) and revelational knowledge. (Spirit based)</i></b></p>
2	<p><b><i>God was so concerned with Israel ( also called Ephraim after its largest tribe) that He said &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Hosea 4:6 (NIV) – "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The consequences of this were in His next words. "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."</i></b></p> <p><b><u><i>This was quite a charge – Israel had ignored God, refused to repent and were eventually judged by God by 3 means – by dispersion, barrenness of the women - and destruction. Imagine if that happened to us today?</i></u></b></p> <p><b>Israel was prosperous and growing – but God could see that inside their lives were corrupt – they did not attribute their prosperity to Him. This is rather similar to the Laodicean church, which some as you might know is likened to the church of today. God was concerned that His people lacked knowledge. They did not realize how separate they were from Him or His love – despite His love continuing. They knew of Him but did not KNOW Him personally.</b></p> <p><b>They thought they were doing well, because their focus was on their doing well. Their focus was not on knowing Him - but He knew their hearts and He pleaded with them to return to Him – "it is I who look after you" "from Me comes your fruit". Hosea 14:8. "Know these things" "My ways are right". Hosea 14:9</b></p>	<p><b><i>In summary</i></b></p> <p><b><i>God could see that they lacked knowledge of Him. They did not know Him as He desired.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>They were unthankful. And were falling away from Him.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Today, we will get to raise the issue as to whether we also lack knowledge and if we really KNOW Him.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>It is also instructive to look at the world today. Our attitude, even in parts of the church does not seem to fully recognize the incredible depth of the part that God plays in our well being.</i></b></p>

<p>4</p>	<p><b>God had patience with His OT people</b></p> <p><b>Then much later – the new covenant</b></p>	<p><b>As you know, right through the OT God’s people strayed and He patiently woo’ed them back many times, until He had done all He could do with them.</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt; 1</b></p> <p><b>Then ultimately.....He sent Jesus.</b></p> <p><b>Now we have Jesus Christ – our Saviour and Lord – and we have the incredible blessing of the NT, with it’s New Covenant – much greater than the OLD Covenant in Hosea’s time - from which we can get to know God’s ways, and more importantly get to KNOW Jesus as a King and a brother to Whom we can go for all things.</b></p>	<p><b>1 This happened in the desert during the time of Moses, right through the–Judges period. Even as He did with David after his fall.</b></p> <p><b>So, today - How is our knowledge of His word?</b></p> <p><b>More importantly, how well do we KNOW Him?</b></p> <p><b>What can we learn from the NT?</b></p>
<p>5</p>	<p><b>I am going to examine a NT example of a special piece of knowledge</b></p> <p><b>What do we know about it?</b></p> <p><b>What does it really mean?</b></p>	<p><b>There are many places in the NT to which we can go. I have chosen one verse in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.</b></p> <p><b>Galatians 4:19 says. “My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, - how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!”</b></p> <p><b>Notice the “...until Christ is formed in you...” Whatever could Paul mean by that? Notice again what he said to them – “that he was <u>again in the pains of childbirth until Christ was formed in them.</u>” <u>The KJV Bible use the word travail instead of pains of childbirth</u></b></p> <p><b>This is an extraordinary statement, but if it is looked at closely it can be seen to be a significant key to Christians today living the life that Christ intended. We are going to look at what this really means.</b></p>	<p><b>First, does it mean the initiation of the Spirit within us, our regeneration? NO!</b></p> <p><b>Because Paul is talking to the Galatians as believers in Jesus Christ, with some experience of that life, but having fallen back into legalism.</b></p> <p><b>They were believers who needed more of the life of Christ formed in them – hence Paul’s prayer</b></p> <p><b>So they are saved, already regenerate, but not yet fully mature in Christ.</b></p>

<p>6</p>	<p>Let's take a look at some important words in this verse.</p>	<p>In this verse we are going to look at 3 important words and phrases – (formed), (pains of childbirth) (Christ)</p> <p><b>"Formed"</b> is the Greek word "morphoo" (Strong's 3445) It is used only once in the whole of the NT - It means - to form, to fashion, to shape something into an image. To transform to a new appearance.</p> <p><b>"..In the pains of childbirth.."</b> means Paul was in travail like a woman in childbirth – perhaps a good description of his prayer style and effort. <i>It is a good analogy for our growth into further stages of the Christian life, from where we had started at our regeneration as babes in Christ.</i></p> <p><b>Christ</b> here <i>is not</i> being used as a proper noun, ie as a name. In this verse Christ (and a few other verses) it means to have the Christian temperament or disposition arising from a sound Christian faith – in short to have His life – see later Zoe! – the Greek word for life. So it is a state of being – it is how we really are in our life – that we have His life in our being. (Strong's 5547 Christos).</p>	<p><i>Galatians 2:20 says exactly that – that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us.</i></p> <p><i>So Paul was aiming to have the Galatians live out of their new life in Christ and leave behind their old fleshly based life.</i></p>
<p>7</p>	<p>So, given these descriptors of the key words what is this verse saying?</p>	<p><i>This verse is saying that Paul was praying earnestly and deeply for the Galatians, that they might grow from being saved children, into disciples that have the benefits of the doctrine of Christ as well as temperament and disposition of Christ – in effect that they might mature sufficiently to have a Christ like nature. (whatever our chronological age) we are taken on into increasing degrees of spiritual maturity.</i></p> <p><i>There is an assumption here - if we are to achieve this. The assumption is that we know what Paul has said and what it means. Obviously we need to be aware of what Paul teaches and what he says is possible. If we are not aware this is in the NT and that Paul says this is the way it happens, then how can we do it? He instructed the Galatians in this way and so he instructs us - to do this for ourselves and for each other.</i></p> <p><i>There is also a condition. That we surrender our lives to Him again (continually) and express our desire to be changed. The need to do that is something that is often missed today.</i></p>	<p><i>If we don't know about these things, we won't know it is possible – so it is a knowledge issue. It is my observation that some Christians go through their lives without getting to know these things.</i></p> <p><i>As a friend from Ghana says, it is like having a hand bag and not knowing what is in it!</i></p> <p><i>I did until around the year 2000, even after many years of bible study and much grace from the Lord.</i></p>

<p>8</p>	<p>Notice the claims Paul is making</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 That the ACTUAL life of Jesus Christ can be formed in a person who believes in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.</li> <li>2 That they can actually have the life of Jesus within them, and that that life of Jesus within can be expressed through them – through their spirit, soul and body.</li> <li>3 He means that he knew there was a basis for the growth or formation of Christ in them – that basis being their regeneration by His Spirit – followed by a process of sanctification – of forming this new life in them more completely.</li> </ol> <p>Paul means that they (the Galatians) did not yet have Christ fully formed in them. There was more spiritual growth to take place. He means they had the initial quickening of the Spirit, but not the fullness of His life.</p>	<p>In summary</p> <p>So Paul was in co-labour through prayer, participating in the persons process of growth - to bring them to maturity, having His life formed in them.</p> <p>This should not be the struggle of self effort, but of waiting on and working with God.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Notice I used that word life in relation to the life of Christ within.</p> <p>that word LIFE</p>	<p>This idea of the life of Christ being formed within us is in many other places in the NT, although the word formed is only used once.</p> <p>Paul uses the word "life" when he said the Colossians:  <b>Col 3:4.</b> "<u>Christ, who is your life</u>, (Strongs 2222)  <i>So what does the word life mean in relation to Christ?</i>  <i>It comes from the Greek word Zoe, referring to the life principle in our spirit and soul. It refers to the highest and best of which Christ is – and which He gives His saints.</i>  <i>"It is the Spirit who gives life (Zoe)" John 6:63</i></p> <p>Then Paul told the Corinthians about this life in Christ</p> <p><b>2 Cor 13:5</b> "<u>Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you?</u>"  <i>So as Paul told the Galatians Christ was being formed within them, to the Corinthians, he actually said that Jesus Christ is in you – a similar expression of the same development! Just a different way of expressing it.</i>  <i>You could be thinking that because this is not your exact experience that what I am saying may not be true. I struggled with that for years.</i></p>	<p><i>One trap is that we can be judging scripture based on our experience, rather than allowing scripture to judge our life – feelings, instead of facts. Moreover, it is a matter of belief – if we can believe we are saved based on what the Bible says, why can't we believe we have His life? Apart from it being the main thing Paul taught, I personally know a number of people around USA, Canada, NZ, Africa, UK who have this as their life experience. Several have taught me – what I know and actually experience I have passed on to others. I am on the track – don't know where exactly – that is God's business.</i></p>

<p><b>10</b></p>	<p>Paul also reminds his readers in other places</p>	<p><b>1 Cor 3:16</b> "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that <u>God's Spirit lives in you?</u>"</p> <p><b>Col 1:26-27</b> "the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of <u>this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.</u></p> <p><i>( In the first 4000 years of Biblical history, although the prophets knew their was a Messiah to come one day, they did not know the form in which this Messiah would relate to them. That the life of Jesus would be within us, living in us and empowering us was quite beyond their knowledge – Paul makes that clear a number of times)</i></p> <p>So, Paul is saying that the initial forming of the life of Christ within us, is enhanced by this life being fully formed – as per Gal 4:19 and Paul's prayer. Like a child growing into maturity, so does the life of Christ fully form within us.</p>	<p><i>(I personally know a young woman who was saved at 14 years of age but who did not really know what the Christian life was all about until her father reminded her what Paul said in 2 Cor 13:5. She was then 33. After that her life showed a great evidence of the life of Christ living in her – I told that story on the mp3 audio for unit 2 Invitation to live)</i></p> <p><b>All these scriptures are telling the same story – the same principle – that God can and does work in human beings by His Spirit and by the life of Christ within us.</b></p> <p><b>Even Jesus taught the same thing. &gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</b></p>
<p><b>11</b></p>	<p>Jesus taught on these things too.</p> <p>And the message was described by Paul to Galatians.</p>	<p>In John 17:21-23, Jesus said He was in the disciples – as the Father was in Him – and that Jesus was in us as believers – all living in the unity of the One Spirit. (See unit 2 in this series) So.....</p> <p>These scriptures not only clearly show that the Spirit and life of Jesus dwells in the believer, but that Paul was saying to the Galatians that his prayer was going to more fully form the life of Christ within them. How wonderful!</p> <p>If you think about it..... Affirming the truth of these statements relates to his assertion that apart from Him we can do nothing. We need Him in us for us to do His will.</p>	<p><b>So that is what Scripture, through Paul, says about the Christian life more fully lived.</b></p> <p><b>But what is the "how to" of having the life of Christ formed within us? What do we need to do in cooperation with Christ Jesus?</b></p>

12a	<p>That might all sound easy, but there a quite a few things to remember. I am going to mention a number of them, all of which come into the story of how God works in and with us.</p>	<p>First, with anything to do with the Kingdom of God, there is an element of divine mystery involved. This is not a mechanical process we are talking about. Two and two don't always make four. God is not our servant. We are His servant. He is in charge! It is all God's work, in His way, in His time. God is in control and He is behind everything that happens. We cannot dictate what will happen. Never forget God's sovereignty!!!!</p> <p>All we can do is to submit to Him and observe what He does, both sovereignly, and in relation to our praise, worship and petition, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. Some things we will never understand, but we are required to trust Him, no matter what. Some things that happen to us, we may not like, but ultimately we find that God knows best. Often what seems contrary to us, is to ultimately extend His Kingdom and do His will in the world.</p>	<p>The experience of Job in how God allowed adversity to come upon an almost perfect man, in order to teach him is an excellent example of what I mean.</p> <p>Likewise, Joseph, Jacob's son suffered from age 17 to age 30 approx. in order that he be prepared to play a major part in the history of both Egypt and Israel.</p> <p>Each of these things I am about to mention here are out of my own experience and not out of some textbook, although these experiences are commonly found in other people's experience.</p>
12b	<p>Faith and intellect</p>	<p>It is not possible to know God by our intellect alone. Knowing Him and communing with Him is through His Spirit communicating through our human spirit. Isaiah could never have communicated with God by his intellect, but God, through the Spirit, in a split second, showed Himself to Isaiah, high and lifted up.</p> <p>However, there is knowledge involved – we learn by our intellect about God, but also by revelation as His Spirit works. So we know God through His spirit by faith, not intellect alone. We KNOW something beyond what the mere words of scripture say.</p> <p><i>Ultimately James says – all things come from above.(1:17) I use the example of a three story building to show lower levels of knowledge from scripture, lead to higher levels but real knowledge, revelational knowledge only comes by the Spirit of God</i></p>	<p><i>1<sup>st</sup> floor – basic intellectual knowledge on visible steps of scripture</i></p> <p><i>2<sup>nd</sup> floor – deeper intellectual knowledge on visible steps of scripture.</i></p> <p><i>3<sup>rd</sup> floor – revelation knowledge only through invisible spiritual steps – not words of scripture.</i></p>

12c	Desire and surrender	<p>We need to desire to know God over and above living our own lives – to know Him etc. Without such an expressed desire we cannot get to know God.</p> <p>And that involves our surrender to Him, not just once, but continually. It involves making Jesus Lord of our lives.</p>	<p>Paul expresses this best in Philippians 3: 8-10 – experiencing the loss of all things in order to know Him.</p> <p>Think about that!</p>
12d	Quietness and reverence	<p>Quietness and reverence before God is vital. Jesus set us the example of being along with His Father. If we neglect to do the same, we rob ourselves and others of blessing.</p> <p>It can be the hardest thing to do, but time spent alone with the Lord needs to be learnt and carried out regularly.</p> <p>Without that happening, having the life of Christ formed within us will be almost impossible, nor will we be able to be as graceful towards others.</p>	<p>There are countless stories of modern men who have somehow made the time to attend to the desires of God, mostly in the early morning.</p>
12e	Difficulties, sufferings, adversity, discipline and chastening	<p>We need to accept that these are a part of the normal Christian life. Learning how to handle difficulties. The Bible promises we will have them - and they are for the purpose of refining us, and trusting God through His Spirit that He can work His miracles for us and even through us.</p> <p>From my experience, having acceptance and perhaps some understanding of God's ways in situations of adversity, we come to rely on Him and have Him change us – in effect to form the Life of Christ within us.</p> <p>I have found mostly that God is able to put us in situations where waiting on Him is ultimately the only answer – and for me, I have had to learn that going through all the other human ways to the exclusion of God is unfruitful.</p> <p>God knows what we can stand and is patient as He allows our suffering until we learn to fully trust in Him – an experience oft repeated as He takes us deeper in learning to trust Him fully.</p>	<p>Look at Hebrews 12 to see about the necessity of the chastening of the Lord.</p> <p>Look up other scriptures to do with these things.</p> <p>Isaiah was told by God – I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48:10</p> <p>And with Ephraim – for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. Gen 41:52</p>

12f	<p>Realize that Knowing a scripture does not mean we can perform it in life</p>	<p>Reading and understanding does not mean we are then able to perform what is said. The mistake we can make is that we believe that by reading the words of scripture and understanding of them, that we have the experience. That is not necessarily so.</p> <p>In 2 Cor 3. Paul says that following the letter of the law brings death, but when we express what the Spirit has written on our hearts, we KNOW and DO according to God. This brings life.</p> <p>Remember when Jesus told the Pharisees that although they knew the scriptures, they were unwilling to come to Him that they might have life. Just one example - <sup>7</sup>“Luke 6:27-28 “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>“bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.</p> <p>Try to do that without the Spirit having changed your heart and see how you go!</p>	<p>It is not a perfect analogy, but imagine a computer, with its hardware and software. What the software is to the hardware, the Spirit is to the written word. They both make the system work.</p> <p>So that is the last of the things that will become a part of your life if you ask the Lord to work in your life in this way – to have the life of Christ formed in you</p>
13	<p>I can't help wondering what God is thinking of us today. Could it be that He thinks we also lack knowledge?</p>	<p>2000 years ago we have in Revelation, the angel of the Laodicean church charged them as follows. “Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.....But those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be zealous therefore and repent.” Rev 3:17, 19. The people's hearts were similar to Hosea's time. To what degree does that apply to us today?</p> <p>So - what do we need to know? From God's viewpoint we need to have knowledge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Of doctrine. What is in the Bible.... Certain doctrines and themes are vital – particularly Christ my life and Christ in you.</li> <li>2. How God works by His Spirit, not wanting us to work out of legalism or self effort.</li> <li>3. To know the main scriptural teachings that make us able to live as God intended – and as Paul taught. Galatians 4:19 provides one doorway into this life. However, you can see that God in His wonderful wisdom provided Paul to teach us this verse and how it fits with many other scriptures down the same line.</li> </ol> <p><i>4 Ultimately only one thing matters – that we KNOW Him-not about Him but to know Him personally.</i></p>	<p>So rejoice in the fact that it was and is God's plan for the life of Christ to dwell in us – and that His life can be formed in us by prayer and commitment to the ways and means of God!</p> <p>So in this life, we need to increase our knowledge, both intellectual but especially that knowledge which comes from the Spirit of God by revelation to our spirits.</p>

*This is the fourth in a series of articles* to further outline and provide resource for believers to move towards Fullness of Life in Christ.

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**Availability.** This study is for use in one to one teaching, or in small groups by those who know this experience for themselves, or by those open to the Spirit to learn together.