

Formation of Christ within us

'My dear children for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth, until Christ is formed in you' (Galatians 4:19)

'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...' (Ephesians 3: 14, 17).

Paul wrote these words to churches of believers.

Why is Paul in labour pains until Christ is formed in them? How is he bowing his knees asking for Christ to dwell in them? Shouldn't Christ be already dwelling in them –since they are believers? What has happened when they received salvation if he is still praying for them for the formation of Christ and for the dwelling of Christ in them?

It is apparent that this is a further spiritual dimension beyond what they have already received and experienced when they accepted Christ as their Saviour.

According to the lexicon, the word *'formed'*, which Paul uses, is normally used to describe the formation of an embryo inside the mother's womb. This means that Paul is aspiring for a further spiritual step in the lives of these believers which is similar to the formation of an embryo in the mother's womb so that this embryo may grow and become a person.

According to the teaching of the early Church, when we receive salvation, a seed of life called 'the saving grace' is put inside us; it is like a zygote; it bears within it the potential of becoming a living being, 'Christ'.

This seed of the saving grace leads to true salvation; yet, we can stop at this point of just being saved. However, we are called for much more than that; we are called *'to become into the likeness of His son'*, to be Christ-like.

This saving grace, the seed of life, needs to be opened up so that the mystery of Christ would come out of it. Then, the person of Christ would start to be formed in our inner man, grow, and extend inside the soul.

The mother's womb in this case is the spirit of the person. The saving grace first comes in the spirit of the person. The spirit is surrounded by the soul. The soul has thrones where sin rules (Romans 5&6). The life of a person may end and the saving grace, the seed of the Life of Christ, remains imprisoned in his spirit. If we stop at the stage of just being saved, we will live a life of struggles and conflicts; this is called '*a life in the flesh*' or '*a state of spiritual childhood*'.

However, according to the theology of Apostles Paul, John and Peter, this seed or cell should grow progressively and fill one's spirit like the embryo that grows and fills the womb. Then the most difficult time comes. As a mother goes into labour and gives birth similarly Christ, in our spirit, goes outside to our soul and to our whole being.

If the walls around the spirit were broken and have fallen down and Christ inside us has grown and extended, He will fill the soul. Consequently, a change happens to the thrones of the soul. Christ will sit on the throne of the soul; the reign of sin will be exchanged with the reign of Christ (Romans 5: 21).

Based on this understanding, the Early Fathers of the Church say that it is as if the person goes through 3 births: being born in the flesh; being born of the Spirit; and the third birth is this breakthrough into the process of the formation of Christ within us, coming out of the cocoon.

Since the formation of Christ is a great transformation in the spiritual life, when the devil realises that this process is starting to take place, he puts walls around the spirit to secure it so that this process would not take place.

Therefore, this process of the formation of Christ faces two oppositions: one of them is from outside, from the evil spirits; and the other is from inside, from the fallen nature and the reign of sin in the soul. The human soul does not want to let go of the throne of sin. Also the devil does not want this to happen as he wants to secure his authority to be able to conquer man –since the throne of sin is the field where the devil can work in believers.

The Early Fathers of the Church maintain that '*the human soul was found in man to be a throne for Christ*'. If the throne of sin in the soul is exchanged with the reign of Christ,

the authority of sin and death, which cause slavery of the members, will disappear; the authority of Christ and freedom will replace them. When Christ fills the soul, this means that He has been formed inside it.

Accordingly, the formation of Christ would literally (not metaphorically) mean that there will no more be a wall between the spirit and the soul because Christ has filled the spirit and has extended to the soul as well and started to be formed inside it as a Person. It will be as if there is a Person, Christ, inside the person, man (refer to the image in the power point slide). Paul wrote: *'it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me'*; it is no more Paul but Christ: Christ's mind, will, passions, hands, feet and everything.

Theologically, this is the real mystery of Incarnation; yet, it is not incarnation in the flesh which Christ took from Virgin Mary, but from the body of His church, the believers.

God's purposes for the End Times cannot be accomplished unless there are true "Christs" and true "Messiahs". Therefore, the formation of Christ is not optional; it is indeed essential.

To complete this process of transformation into Christ likeness, we need to go through a journey which has some principles. These principles are practical and achievable but most importantly, they are dependent on God's grace and on opening the channels for the true Life of Christ to come to our inner being bringing *'the formation of Christ within us'*.

The outcome of this formation is great beyond measure. This outcome includes, among others:

- 1) Acquiring the Kingdom personality
- 2) Restoration of the harmony and integration between the soul, spirit and body –as was the case in man's original creation
- 3) The inheritance of Christ
- 4) The garment of righteousness
- 5) Entering into a different dimension in facing the opposition of the devil

6) The manifestation of the true offices of the Church

7) Christ's accompaniment

Man is composed of spirit, soul and body (1Thessalonians5:23)

- **spirit(=heart)** : The innermost part of our being --> The only channel to connect to God
- **soul** : mind(maestro of the soul), emotions, will --> self ego / personality
- **body** : given to us by God to live in the material world

Summary of the Process of Christ's formation

