

The Real Life for the Christians

Galatians 2:19-21

“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

In our last study we looked at the fact that Paul taught that a person was “justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law...” Tonight we are going to look at the crucified life and how it relates to our everyday living.

In order to draw attention to world peace, in 1973 Patrice Tamao of the Dominican Republic allowed himself to be crucified as thousands watched on TV. Tamao had three six-inch stainless steel nails driven through his hands and feet and intended to stay on the cross for 48 hours. However, after 20 hours he requested to be taken down because he had developed an infection.

From the time of Christ’s sacrifice to the present, many have sought to show their devotion to Jesus, secure their own forgiveness, or make some public statement by actually having themselves crucified. In 1965, Daniel Waswa in Kenya compelled his wife to crucify him "for the sins of all Kenyans." (Men don’t let your wives try this at home!)

After reluctantly obeying, his wife collapsed and died- apparently from shock. Daniel was rescued by neighbors, but he later died from an infection. Hopefully we know that this is not what the Lord was talking about when he said take up your cross, and I hope that we understand that this is not what Paul is saying in our text...but what does he mean?

Look once more at what Paul has said in verse 20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” There are at least three or four things in this verse that we will need to take a little closer look at tonight.

First of all, Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ...” **Believers by virtue of our corporate union with Christ were included in his death.** Therefore, when Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ,” he is speaking of an *attitude*. That is exactly what Jesus means when He said in Luke 9:23, “If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, take up his cross every day, and follow me.” Jesus is talking about an *attitude*.

Though our sins were nailed to him on the cross, and though he died in our stead, there is a daily crucifixion that must be made. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 15:31, “I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” Because of his faith in Christ he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. The *spirit*, or the *attitude*, of the cross must prevail in the heart and life of every Christian if they are to follow the pattern that has been set before us by our Lord.

Sometime people get this passage confused. Paul is not talking about “self-denial” but “denial of self.” The crucified life is a life of *servitude; willing to put others first.*

Second, Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I have live, but Christ lives in me...” **In other words, the Christian experience not only involves an attitude, or spirit, of the cross, it involves an identification with Christ in life.** Paul put it this way in Philippians 1:21, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The Christian life cannot be lived apart from Christ. Every day this knowledge of the fact that you are a “child of God” will have a bearing

on the things you **do**, the attitude that you **exhibit**, and the love that you **show**.

Third, Paul says, "...the life which I now live (that is, after having died with Christ) in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." **Notice that Paul once more reminds us that Christ died for us!** I Peter 1:18-20 reminds us that this very truth was born in the heart of God before the world began, "... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world..." **Isaiah prophesied this truth in Isaiah 53:5-6,** "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." **Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 5:3,** "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." **Galatians 1:3-4 says,** "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that the might deliver us from this present world according to the will of God and our Father."

As we look upon the crucifixion scene we see three crosses, we see Christ on the middle cross, and thieves on either side, yet I was there. I was crucified with Christ because my sins were nailed to him on that cross! **Romans 6:6 says,** "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." **Therefore, according to God's reckoning at Calvary, we died in the Lord Jesus; but we did not remain dead.** We arose from the dead when God rose up Christ from the dead.

Now look at what Paul says, “If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

The fundamental need in the human heart is to be right with God. There is nothing that is even a close second. If I know that God and I are OK, then I can handle anything else the world or the devil throws at me. **Furthermore, if God and I are OK, I have a foundation from which to work to make sure my wife and I are OK, and my children and I are OK, to see to it that work and finances and lifestyle are all what they ought to be.** Most importantly, **if God and I are OK,** I know I will spend eternity with Him.

There is something deep within our being that cries out for meaning and purpose. For life to make some sense and have some meaning we must in some way build a relationship with God. Pascal said it this way, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man that cannot be filled by any created thing but only by God the Creator made known through his Son, Jesus Christ.” Therefore, says that only by dying can we truly live by God’s grace.

One of the greatest truths in all of the Word of is that true righteousness is not for sale. **Works righteousness** is based solely on your ability to keep God’s laws perfectly. From the beginning men and women have sought to determine their gods, find out what they require and then live accordingly.

Monuments and statues have been created, sacrifices both animal and human have been offered, and personal denial and mutilation, on and on, I could describe what mankind has done in

order to gain the favor of the gods. Our nature and the history of the race stand in opposition to what Paul is saying here in these verses and yet our hearts know that what he says is true.

Reflect for a moment on your own experience – How much energy have you spent in trying to earn God's favor by doing this or that. It seems like an endless treadmill of activity and yet without satisfaction.

But the Bible very clearly teaches that nobody can be justified by the law, yet we still try. The law condemns sin and prescribes death as its penalty. Thus the function of the law is to condemn, not to justify. No matter how hard we try the Law only condemns and never justifies. If we live under law, then we are traveling backwards in our spiritual journey.

Paul is simply saying that if Christians rebuild the law, and insist on obeying it, like Peter did in Antioch, like the Jews did who preached circumcision, like the Galatians were doing, and like we do when we seek to earn approval or acceptability, then we are transgressing against Christ himself. F. F. Bruce says this concerning the Law; "Someone who builds up what he formerly demolished acknowledges his fault, explicitly in his former demolition or implicitly in his present rebuilding. If the one activity was right, the other must be wrong."

Therefore, Paul reminds us that the Law can only buy us death. In other words, life is not found in the law, as seen in Galatians 3:10, "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." He made this same statement in 2 Corinthians 3:6-9, "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the

ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!" He continues in Hebrews 10:28, "Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses." Now watch this - the Law only wears a mask of life. But underneath the mask you will find death, destruction and eternal torment.

Therefore, Paul said that he died to the law so that he might live. When Paul finally understood that amazing grace of God, he realized that his previous life of Judaism was no life at all instead it was a fearful expectation of judgment.

True freedom is not found in the law, but is found in Christ living in you. Christ died and bore the penalty of my law breaking, and the blessing of what he has done has become mine because I am united with him. That is how I can say with Paul, "I died to the law."

Therefore, Paul draws this conclusion, "I do not make void the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain." Paul's conclusion is simply this - the Grace of God is the power that saves.

If a person could be set right with God by any other means than grace, then the Cross was a waste of time. Do we really think that God would have allowed His Son to go to the awful, excruciating death He suffered on the Cross, do we really think Christ would have willingly accepted the humiliation, the condemnation, the separation from his Father which the cross entailed for Him, had there been any other way?

If anyone could earn salvation by a supreme effort of the will or by a superhuman adherence to God's laws or by a rigid observance of religious rites and rituals, don't you think God would have worked overtime to help him achieve those standards? Sure He would have. The fact of the matter is, that the Cross was necessary because grace is

the only way. We were utterly helpless, so God did it all, and the only thing he asks of us is to believe and receive.