

Galatians 2: 20; “I am Crucified with Christ”, Message # 12 in the series – “Christ Has Made Us Free”, Conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 6th, 2013, at the church.

Truly, this is one of the most wonderful verses in all the Bible, even though at first sight it might seem otherwise. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Crucifixion is not a pleasant thing to think about. It is one of the most gruesome of deaths. Our Lord Jesus was crucified for our sins. The text says that we as believers have been crucified with Him. We will attempt to understand this statement better in the next few minutes. In this verse we need to see, that in conversion, God has dealt decisively with the self-life in the heart of every true Christian, through the crucifixion of Christ. And what He has done by His mighty working at the time of our conversion, He intends that it will affect everything that we as a believer will think and do, in living our Christian life to Him.

And so, as we consider these verses, we will want to better understand the 2 principles of truth and reality, which are given to us here, in relation to our own self-life, as a believer in Jesus Christ. If we truly understand these principles, they will enable us to glorify God in the way we think, the things that we say, and all that we will do. 1st – I find here, the spiritual principle that I have been crucified with Christ. 2nd – I find the spiritual principle that Christ is living in me. And then, when we come to observe the Lord’s Supper, we will think about the spiritual truth and the reality that Christ loved me, the believer, and gave Himself for me.

1st – The spiritual principle of truth that I have been crucified with Christ.

Now, we need to remember that the Apostle Paul is speaking in the first person singular here. He is saying, “I am crucified with Christ”. We Christians need to remember that the whole of our being able to live our life to God, rests upon our personally being in spiritual union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Can you say, as you listen to me here this afternoon – Jesus is my Savior from sin? Can you say – I have died with Christ? As a Christian I will come to understand, that I have all the blessings of salvation because Christ has died for my sins. I believe that. I believe that my being saved from my personal sins, and my having received the free gift of eternal life, did not come from myself, but they came to me from God’s having placed me in Christ. I now know, or I should know, that God is seeing me in Christ, continually, as I live my life to Him.

So when I first come to Christ, I must understand that I have been crucified with Christ; that God has literally spiritually placed me into His death. Turn with me over to 2nd Corinthians 5: 14-16. We find the Apostle Paul speaking here of his great motivation in preaching the gospel. It was the love of Christ. “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Now since I have read you these words, I want to ask you whether you believe in the doctrine of Particular Redemption, or whether you believe in a Universal Redemption? Either may be the case and you still may be a Christian, but there are spiritual implications for your growth as a Christian depending upon what you hold.

For a Universal Redemption by Christ means that you believe that God has provided salvation for you and every person in the world who has ever lived, in Christ, through His death and resurrection. But, now that He has saved you, you do not believe that He has done anything in particular for you, in the application of that redemption to your heart, to take away the dominion of sin over your life. You believe that objectively, God has done something for you; that is, He sent His Son, and you have believed in Him and you have repented of your sins, but that these were your choices. And now that you are a Christian, you believe that you continue to repent where you need it, and you continue to live your life unto God based upon your own

decisions and your own determination to follow Christ. If this is the case, perhaps you have not understood that the self-life has really been changed, has really been crucified with Christ.

But when you look at these verses in 2nd Corinthians 5, you find that there is a very unusual wording that is given to us here in this passage. It says that when Christ died, all whom He died for, they also died. And so we must ask ourselves: Who are the “all” in this passage? And in what sense did they die? Is this all men, universally, who have died? No, it cannot possibly be the case that all mankind has actually spiritually died with Christ. Rather, it must certainly mean that only those chosen by God unto salvation; those chosen by God to inherit salvation and eternal life have died with Him, because it is these persons, and these persons alone, who have died to their own ability to save themselves, or to change their own hearts. It is these persons who have believed in Jesus’ finished work on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins, and a righteousness better than their own.

It therefore is these persons, and these only, who have experienced a real spiritual death to sin, to the world, and to themselves being able to live the Christian life in their own strength. They have died to living to themselves. Christ died so that all believers might live to God and to Him. So let me ask you whether you have experienced this death to sin, and are you now living in light of having been crucified with Christ? There is a way that you can know. Turn with me over Mark 8, verse 31. “And He (that is Jesus) began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.” He spoke this word openly.” “Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.” “But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan!’ “For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” “When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”

Now, I hope that you can see that Peter, even though he believed in Christ needed this correction from Jesus. He needed to know that even though he was a believer that in regard to Jesus’ having to go to the cross and die for his sins, that he was setting his mind on the things of man instead of upon God. He need to learn this principle practically, that something drastic happens to your self-life at the time of your conversion to Christ. You believe in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, but you also receive a New Heart. Your heart is also circumcised, which means you have received grace, in experiencing a real death to sin, to be able to begin to live your life to God’s glory and not your own.

You begin, from that time forward to deny yourself; to deny your self-life of living only for your own interests; you set your mind on the interests of God. You realize that your own self-strength is not enough to enable you to do what God requires of you in His word, and your own self-righteousness will not be the basis of anything that you do for the glory of God. Therefore, you affirm, by faith, that every single ounce of merit, and any ability you might have, to do what God would have you to do, from all of the right motives, this comes from Jesus Christ Himself. This is what it means to be crucified with Christ. Your ability to deny yourself, to repent, and not to pursue sinful and worldly pleasures, all of this comes from Christ, because Christ has died so that you might die to sinful selfishness, and live to God.

Turn over to Galatians 5: 24 and 25. “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Notice the wording here; “Those who belong to Christ have (past tense) crucified the flesh”. That is, the reigning power of this selfish and sinful principle which used to dominate your thinking before your conversion has been removed. It has been removed by the working of the Holy Spirit, His circumcising of your heart. You have willingly gone along with the initial and on-going work of

God the Holy Spirit in your mind and heart and spirit, and it is this sense that you have crucified the flesh in your mind and heart. God the Spirit has given you life in Jesus through the New Birth. He also expects that by that same life, you will willingly walk in truth and righteousness according to God's word, and you will manifest the fruit of the Spirit's working. The power of sin and the world which characterized the old "you", have been broken by Christ at the cross, and the new power of living righteously and godly has come.

2nd – Let's think about the spiritual principle that it is Christ who is living in me.

"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." This reality is a most blessed reality; that Christ lives in me, the one who is living by faith in Him. Notice that this is not simply a matter of being justified. Paul has dealt with that back in verse 16. Here Paul is speaking now about living the Christian life. That is a matter related directly to sanctification and holiness. Paul says that this life is to be lived by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Those are the things which each of us should remember. Christ has loved me and given Himself for me on the cross so that He might live and dwell in my heart. And He has come into my heart by His Spirit so that His life, and His work of grace, might be cultivated and seen in my life.

What should be my response? My response should be that I will trust that He by His Spirit is faithfully working in me. I believe that there is this good work of grace going on in my life; that He has begun it, and He will bring me to maturity through it. Philippians 2: 13 – "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure." This good on-going reality, of Christ's presence and work of grace, is designed to bring me to the place where I really will really become righteous and holy in a way that will keep me humble. And, over time, it will be a work which will bring Him all the glory for all that He has accomplished in and through my life. In this regard, our Lord Jesus Christ uses the ministers of His Word to help in His own work.

Turn with me over to the book of Colossians, Chapter 1, verse 24-29. "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints." "To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." So you can see from this that Christ lives in you, the believer, and He is there to do His great works of grace to transform you from a sinful, selfish person, to being a holy, loving, and thoughtful person who keeps His Word.

These works of grace, performed by Christ in your heart, will lead you to do good works. And all of these good works will be done by you in the power of Christ's Spirit who is in you. Christ's power and purpose is to give you grace which will lead to righteousness. What is your responsibility? Well look over at Colossians 3: 1-4. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." Your responsibility is to keep seeking Christ, since you have been raised from the dead spiritually in your heart. Your responsibility is to seek those things which are above where Christ is literally seated in the heavenly places at the right hand of God.

What does this mean practically? It means that you should cultivate a spiritual life. Cultivate the hidden life of faith in Jesus Christ, every day, in all the situations which you face. Remember also to think about what it says then in Philippians 2: 14-16. "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain." Complaining and murmuring are not the will of God for the Christian. Praise and thanksgiving are, when you realize that Christ Himself is with you. Let's praise Him together now, by our partaking together of these elements before us.

3rd – Let's think together about living by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

You might be thinking, as I have been preaching to you – If Christ is literally physically seated at the right hand of the Father, then how can He also be in me, dwelling and living in my heart? Well, turn with me over to John 14, verse 15. "If you love, me, keep my commandments." "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither see Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." I want you to see from these verses that Christ has loved you and given Himself for you so that He might dwell with you and be in you. He dwells in you by giving you the gift of His Holy Spirit when you first believe. He loves you even now in His abiding with you, through the Spirit's indwelling.

The worldly people around you are not going to understand this life that you are living. They will not be able to see it because they neither see Him, nor know Him. But He will be your Helper in everything spiritual forever. Listen to John 16, verses 7-14. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth." "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever he hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

This is how Christ can be in you, and still be physically seated at the right hand of the Father. The Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart. And the Holy Spirit is guiding you into all the truth of God's Word. He is perfectly and faithfully taking what is Christ's and He is declaring it to you through the preaching of God's Word. These 2 realities of having been crucified with Christ, and Christ living in the believer's heart, these are the greatest realities in the experience of everyone who belongs to Jesus Christ. As we come to partake of these elements our hope is to be able to discern the Lord's body; that we would see Him as crucified for us. But it is also important that we see Him as having loved us and given Himself for us so that our faith would be nourished. He is the bread that came down from heaven. He has given His body and blood for spiritual food for you to partake of by faith. You feed on His faithfulness.

In this ordinance Christ also shows you His great love for You. It is special love and it is a personal love. "He loved me, and gave himself for me." He died because He knew that by His death that He could save you, and cleanse you, and teach you the things that you need to learn to make you holy in your experience. This is why He gave Himself. It is a love which will not let us go. Let us partake with these thoughts in our minds.

