

Death, Life, and the Faith of the Son of God

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Bible Text: Galatians 2:20

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Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father and most gracious and holy Lord, great is thy faithfulness. O Lord, how great thou art to bring us here again this day to worship thee, to bring us here in Spirit and in truth that thou art pleased to do. O Lord, may you prepare this hour and the hour to come for thy glory, for thy name's sake. May you feed thy sheep and, Lord, may thy Spirit and thy holiness and thy faithfulness and thy love be a present reality in our souls. May you, Lord, take us from the things of this world, ourselves, the condemnation of the law and all of those things, Lord, that would beset and weigh our souls down and may you bear us up in thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

If you would bear with me just a moment, I will tell you it's been a very interesting week for me. I started the week, of course, in great trepidation of looking toward the day of our Pastor's great appointment with the doctors and the hospital and everything and went through some pretty rough times there, a lot of fear. Then, Monday night, the day before that day, the Lord gave me a measure of peace and you always know when the Lord's presence is there because he authors prayers. He authors things and takes you to places and gives you an understanding of what really is going on even though your carnal mind can't catch up with it. It's really hard to explain.

As Tuesday rolled around and we went through the events of the day, the same thing took place: the Lord spoke to me, he authored great prayers, answered those prayers. I tell you, I felt on that day, at that moment, I felt just an inclining of what Paul must have gone through when he said he was caught up to the third heaven. Just to see the magnificence of the Lord fulfilling what he said he would do and do it more abundantly. It's hard for me to imagine that the Lord could take me in a higher place than that.

Then Wednesday came. Wednesday I had no communion. Wednesday I felt like I was lost. By the middle of the day, Wednesday, I was questioning whether I was God's child or not. How? How do we get from Tuesday and the Lord's presence being so strong and then Wednesday comes along? I sat down Wednesday night to have Bible study with my wife, we try to do that as the Lord leads every night, and I told her, I said, "Not tonight. There is nothing there. I'm empty. I have no feeling of the Lord's presence and if I was to open the Bible, all you'd hear is what I think," and that's a very scary place to be. And

that depression, whatever you want to call it, it lasted throughout that evening until about 11 o'clock. I'd been wrestling with things. I hadn't had anything as the Lord's leading to come and speak to you about and then the Lord dropped a text to me that night. Then, from that night into Thursday and Friday, the Lord's been speaking to me through this text and, as I said, it's one of my all-time favorites. If you could have those in the word of God, the whole word of God is precious to me but when Paul penned these words and the Holy Spirit penned these words, I love to reflect upon these words. But even in those times, I can't get there on my own.

So, I want you to turn with me to Galatians 2:20. It should be very familiar to a lot of you in here. It's probably one that you learned early in your life to quote; maybe one that you go to in time of need. But I know it's what the Lord gave me for this hour today and also to feed me the last couple of days. Paul writes, I should say, the Holy Spirit writes in Galatians 2:20,

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

This is a very full verse. In fact, we will have it divided up for us in four headings. But before we even get to the four headings, we've got to begin at the end because the end of this verse is really where it all begins. When Paul said “who loved me and gave himself for me,” Paul is talking about this union that he has in Christ, the life that he has in Christ and where it comes from. It comes from the love of Christ and not only is it the love of Christ that is energized in our souls, but it's resurrection life. Next week, of course, is Resurrection Day. We'll be hearing about that time; our minds are taken to that time in history. But resurrection life in the child of God is every day of his life. It's a reality of living in Christ and I do stress the word “living.”

And that's what we see at the end of this: “who loved me and gave himself for me.” That perfect sacrifice in all that Christ did on the cross when he said it was finished, it was finished. Now, you and I as we hear those words “it is finished” we think what does that mean for us? And to each of us in here, it probably has a deeper meaning, a less deep meaning, whatever it is but for the child of God, that is impregnated with all of the finished work that Christ did. It is finished for the child of God. That's what Paul is brought to here. That's what Paul is brought to see again: who loved me. Paul said, “All that I just said in this verse,” and let's not make any mistake about where this verse is seated: Paul is having a conversation about the law, being freed from the law, not the condemnation of the law, the burden of the law.

But that's not the only thing that burdens us in this world. It is a great deal of burden to us but what Paul sees now is liberty and to you and I, it may be a paradox, the first thing that we see because the liberty begins in death. Crucifixion death. And Paul says all of this, he says, “I want you to understand where this is coming from: it's coming from the love of Christ. It's coming from the perfect sacrifice of Christ.” And because of what he's done,

because of “it is finished,” I can say these things. This is life to me. Keep that in mind. This is resurrection life as we go through this verse.

Under the first heading we have: I am crucified with Christ. The Greek says “with Christ I have been crucified.” I am crucified with Christ. Now, to me, this has two meanings. The first one is representatively. Christ, when he died, I died with him. Christ, when he arose, I arose with him. Christ, when we ascended, I ascended with him. We have Scripture to support all of them. We have “we are seated with Christ in heavenly places,” that's ascension. We have “dead with Christ, risen with Christ,” we have the Colossians passage that tells us all about what we have in Christ Jesus as our representative head. As he went to the cross, he took his people there. As he died, we died with him. Let that sink in for a moment because that's a glorious truth. It's a glorious truth when he came up triumphant out of that grave, that he brought all of his children with him, that none of those enemies have any hold upon them. They can't keep us in the ground. And as he ascended into heaven, he ascended triumphantly and he's reigning triumphantly. That's where we are. That's what we understand representatively: Christ did it; we are with Christ and in Christ in all three of those victories.

But the second way I understand this and the one I need the most down here on this earth is experientially, experimentally. What does this mean “I am crucified with Christ”? And Paul says it here in the next little bit. He talks about two “I's”: a living “I” and a dead “I.” “Nevertheless I live, yet not I.” There is a dead “I” and there's a living “I.” So who exactly is crucified? Well, let's turn to the holy word to see about that. We're coming right back to Galatians real quick so if you hold your finger there and turn over to Romans 6:6, we start our journey to tell us who this crucified “I” is. We'll go ahead and start in Romans 6:5 instead of 6. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” There is that representative thought I was telling you about. We have been planted together in the likeness of his death and in the likeness of his resurrection we shall live triumphantly that way.

But in verse 6, Paul tells us, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.” When Paul writes that in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ,” what is it that's put to death? It's the old man. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin,” and that's the whole body of sin, by the way, “might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” That's the whole beauty of the death of the sin when Christ puts it to death in us. When he slays that sin, that's a sin that's been put to death. It doesn't have a hold on us anymore. Now, we all can sit in here and say, “These are the things I struggle with in this life; these are the things that make my soul struggle in this life. I go after this. I know that I'm this way.” Maybe I'm quick to anger; maybe I'm quick to follow people; maybe I have a problem with man, in pleasing man. All of these things are the things that Christ, in his people, that's all I'm talking about, is the child of God, is putting to death, has put to death and is living it out being put to death. So, we have a present reality, we have a future reality and we have a past reality where he did it before the foundation of the world. All of this is the gloriousness of what Christ has done. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.” That's happened but it's also happening. We're living it out, that's Christ in us.

Now, let's go back to Galatians and let's look at chapter 5 real quick. Verse 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Now, we look at something like that and all of a sudden we go, "Oh, well there you go. That's something I'm supposed to do." They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh. Listen, the Greek says this and I know it's kind of choppy but: those of Christ, the flesh is crucified. That's what the Greek says there. Those in Christ, or those of Christ, the flesh is crucified. Now, we're going to answer that question how that takes place. That's what he's telling us here.

In Galatians 2, but before we go back there, let's just look over the page to verse 14 which we looked at the last time I was up here but let's make a couple of comments about it again this morning. Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Once again, something there is crucified. What is crucified in there? Does this have anything to do with a new man? No. What is crucified here? The world is. What world now are we talking about? Are we talking about the world outside of us? Because that's going to live until Christ throws it into the lake of fire. That's not crucified. It's the world here. It's the world within. That's the thing that Christ must crucify because we will always be a slave to that world. We will serve that world. That's what Ecclesiastes tells us: that the world is set so close in our heart, it's such a present reality of an enemy. And it's not just the world, it's Satan as we saw that in Zechariah when he was standing right there in the ear of Joshua the high priest. Not only that, we know how close the old man is to us. He's living right there within us.

So, all of these enemies are not these enemies that are over the hill somewhere that we're going to fight in the future, all of these enemies are in our breast, they are inside of us. That's how close they live. That's how close they reside and how foolish it is to believe that these enemies cannot influence our lives or have a hold on us in this life. How foolish it is to think that we've got them all right where we want them and that they have no influence on our daily transactions because we do have this old man which we're going to see back in Galatians 2 again.

So, let's turn back to our text over in Galatians 2. "I am crucified with Christ." The carnal "I" that Paul talks about here, it rebels. It rebels against the cross because as we talked about last time, the denying of self, the taking up the cross and following Christ, that's not something the natural man or anything in us wants any part of. It wants no part of it at all. That natural "I" will always rebel but the spiritual "I" is brought to submit to what Christ has done and what Christ is doing in the soul and until the Lord puts that world away and crucifies that world in you and I, it's going to reign. It's going to rule. It's going to get its way.

But I want you to understand, Paul is talking about and we sang that song this morning, "Great is thy faithfulness." We can't look at Christ and we can't look at the Triune God through our understanding of how we do things. We half do a lot of things. We cut corners. We're not faithful. We're not faithful to pray every day. We're not faithful to do

the things that we should do every day. But Christ is faithful. Great is his faithfulness, so much higher than any thought of faithfulness you and I have.

“I am crucified with Christ.” That's our first heading and I think at this time of year when we think of Resurrection Day and we think of what happened on the cross, the two malefactors that were crucified with Christ, it's a beautiful picture. Both of them at the beginning rebelling. One made willing in the day of the Lord's power to see the Lord as the Lord was. No longer was he railing against Christ. No, he saw Christ and he saw paradise. He saw where the Lord was going to take him. That's what grace does. That's what the grace of Christ does: it subdues the one. At first, remember, they were both dead in sins and trespasses. One of them there in the very last moments of his life, he received grace. Grace came upon him and to look at that cross, both of them sitting up there, they were both condemned. They're complaining, “Why can't you save us?” They're mocking him but the time that grace came, the one that was still on the cross didn't look at the cross anymore, did he? “We rightfully belong here but that one is righteous. He's done nothing.” Well, who revealed that to you? Just a minute ago you were reviling against him. That's the power of Christ. That's the faithfulness of Christ. That's the power of grace. And that one could do nothing else but submit to the cross and follow him and do you know where he followed him to? Paradise. “Today you will be with me in paradise.” You and I experience paradise every day that Christ comes to our souls, every moment that Christ comes to our souls.

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.” As I said, it's quite a paradoxical understanding. It seems like if you're crucified, then you're dead. Something is dead but the child of God lives because he's crucified. The child of God lives. “I am crucified with Christ, but nevertheless I live.” We think that crucifixion is death but to the new man, it is life.

Hold your finger there again and let's go over to Romans 8. This will be the last time we go somewhere today so just hold your finger there and go to Romans 8 and look at verse 10 with me. “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin,” and we're going to talk about that. “The body is dead because of sin but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” The Spirit is life. Christ is life. This is “nevertheless I live.” The body is dead; the body is put to death. It's crucified because of sin but then life springs up for the child of God. “Nevertheless I live.” Follow me now: just as you've got a perfect weight system up here and you put a heavier weight on the left side, that left side is going to go down and the right side is going to go up. It's that way in the child of God's life. As he experiences the crucifixion of his old man as the Lord reveals it, the new man and the life in the new man is raising up and the dead man is being put down.

Now, some may say, “Oh, you're explaining progressive sanctification.” I'm not talking about holiness. I will never be one that believes you can add to the holiness of Christ. He is perfectly holy. What he has and what he's given his children is perfect holiness. We are holy in him. That's the new man. I'm talking about a growth in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord and that grace subdues the flesh and subdues the old man and puts

him down so the newness of life comes. That's what I'm talking about. That's what Paul is talking about.

"Nevertheless I live." That's what I'm saying: I searched this week to see why is it this way for me? Why is it? Why is it this way a lot of times? I don't want those times to end. "Lord, when you take me up to those places, nothing else matters." I mean, I don't have a view of work, I don't have a view of things that I've got to do around the house, there is nothing. It's just enjoying Christ in the communion of him. Boy, I tell you what, when that's hidden and when that's taken away, the crash, I don't know what else to call it, it is a great spiritual low. But it's not hopeless. As I told my wife that I couldn't lead a Bible study but I'm not hopeless. I know that Christ is there. I know that he's dealing with me in some issues here. I know that. I know that for some reason the Lord made me to wait because of him. He said, "You're going to sit and wait on my presence to come." And this right here, when the worldly man suffers loss in this world, it kills him. It just absolutely shatters him but for the child of God, when he suffers loss in this world and Christ reveals himself in that loss, why that loss took place was for your soul.

That's what life is. It's not in the circumstances and it's not in the things of this world and it's not in the doing of the things in this world. It's experiencing Christ in them. It's experiential for the child of God. For the religionist, no such thing. It's absolutely what we talked about first: it's Christ has done this for me, I'm going to go and do it with him, good, good, whatever. Where's the life in the soul? This is the secret to vital godliness in the soul. It's Christ. Vital godliness means we must have it. We must experience Christ this way: in a killing of the deadness and in energizing of a renewing of the Spirit in the life of Christ in the soul.

Now we move to the next heading: "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I love this part. Paul, as he's exclaiming and making this wonderful declaration out of his soul, and this is the only way I could tell you, it's out of his soul and it's in the power of the Holy Ghost. How do I know that? Because immediately Paul says, "This has nothing to do with me. It has nothing to do with the creature. Don't look at me. Yet not I, this isn't me. I haven't done this. I haven't given myself life. I haven't procured life. I haven't prayed more. I haven't sought Jesus more. I haven't done any of this. Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me. Look what he has done. Look what his strength has done." All prayer, all waiting, all watching, all loving, all faith, where does it come from? It comes from the strength of Christ. It's "yet not I" and that's the thing: when the child of God is exercised in what Christ has done, that is the heavenly conversation. That's the gospel conversation that fills his lips and his soul. This is what Christ has done. It's the resurrection power of what he's done in the soul. It's not what I've done. It's not because I prayed. Are you kidding me?

And this religious world tells you that over and over again: the more you pray, the more you go to church, the more you read your Bibles, the more you... What does it get you? Head knowledge if anything? And I'm not saying anything is bad about those things in and of yourselves they are, but boy, when the Lord's in them, when the Lord draws you there, when the Lord meets you in prayer, when the Lord authors that prayer. That's the thing. I don't know what to pray for. That situation we had this week, I mean, it had more

turns and ups and valleys. You couldn't tell me that anybody in this room knew what to pray for when we started and how it ended. How Christ came and ended it, far more abundantly great than any of us could have every imagined. How could we know? We have finite minds. We look at situations, we read the situation and we go, "Well, this is the best case scenario of what this could be." Thank God he doesn't listen to me, that my Lord is not swayed by my best case scenario, my worst case scenario. Superabounding grace.

"Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Notice what Paul says: Paul does not say "I live in Christ," Paul says "it is Christ which liveth in me." Do you see the difference there? Do you see who it begins with? Do you see how everything begins with his Lord and it ends with him? He's the author and finisher of the faith. We're going to see about that here in a minute. He's the author and finisher of life. He is the author and finisher of whatever you want to put in there: prayer life, life with the children of God together, the spiritual unity. It begins and ends with Christ and there is no other way.

It's not our interest in Christ but it's his interest in us. I've heard enough of this religion for a while that always begins with the creature. I've heard enough of it. I got my ears full of it again this week, of what the creature has done for Christ and what he's done for God and if that's all you've got, you'll die in that. You'll die in an empty, empty promise of what you've done for someone that never knew you. But what has Christ done in your life for you? If you be the child of God, it's his presence there in your soul. Is this that we have explained today in being crucified with Christ and living in Christ and all of Christ, is that present in you?

Now, we turn to the end. We turn to the end of this passage, another beautiful declaration. They are all through this, it is just one depth after another depth and now he says, "And the life which I now live in the flesh," this is why right here, this passage right here, this part, this is what the Lord spoke to me. This is what he spoke to me as I struggled so hard this week. The Lord said, "Shawn, you're still living in the flesh," meaning I'm still here, I'm not in heaven where these things don't end. I'm still here. I'm still here on this earth. That's what Paul said, "And the life which I now live in the flesh," and the beauty of this declaration, I pray that the Lord lifts every one of your souls right now to say these words that the life you live down here in this body right now, you "live by the faith of the Son of God." Not your faith. Not the way you see things. You live each moment of your life by the faith of the Son of God. That's the thing. It's still alive down here in the flesh. Not of the flesh but still alive in the flesh. I pinch myself and I'm still here.

These are the times – I've told you all this many times, I don't have a death wish. I certainly don't but those times that you are taken with the Lord and you have that communion with him, oh, you long for them. You long for them. You're not worried about what you're leaving behind. That's what Paul said, "Do you know what the reality is?" The life you still live here, you're still here but how do you live it? How is it lived? Is it lived by your faith? Because if it is, you're in trouble. Your faith will always betray you. Your faith of what you can conjure up, when you can conjure it up, it will fail you. Paul said, "I don't want anything to do with that thing."

“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” I live by the faith of the Son of God. What a deep thought. We have Christ in our heart. We have the faith of Christ in our heart and yet we still have a heart that is deceitful above all things. We've got a new heart where Christ is resident and we've got an old stony, nasty, desperately wicked heart. I hate that heart. I desire that heart to be killed, to be put away and the heart where Christ resides and the heart where I commune with Christ, where he brings me to him, I long for that every day of my life.

When I read something like this and I see I live by the faith of the Son of God, two passages always come to mind for me. The Lord is faithful to bring two passages every time I see that word “faith.” There is no other way to please him, that's one of them. There is no other way to please God but through his faith. And let that resonate a minute. Whatever it is you do, whatever it is you endeavor to do today, if it's not of the faith of the Son of God, it is sin. That's the second one: and whatsoever is not of this faith, the faith of the Son of God is sin. And if that doesn't make you walk circumspectly, that's what that does. You've heard that terminology in here: walk circumspectly. That's what the faith of the Son of God causes the child of God to do. We're not going to do it without that. The faith of the Son of God says, “Whoa. Is this of me?” And then he reveals what's of him.

That's what Paul said. This is where I've been taken. This is what I see now. Even as I live this life in the flesh, I live it by the faith of the Son of God. I am so thankful to the Holy Spirit that he wrote it this way. That he didn't say, “I live it by faith,” because, boy, I tell you what, that would have gotten a lot of interpretation to man. You know, you can't argue with this. “I live by the faith of the Son of God.” No other way.

“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” That's the word that the Lord sent me and then as it bleeds into 21 and in 21 Paul says, “I do not frustrate the grace of God.” Do you know what that means? The Greek there says “I do not set aside the grace of God.” That's what that means. I don't set it aside. I can't set it aside because of the faith of the Son of God. I'm kept by the faith of the Son of God. I live by the faith of the Son of God. I hope by the faith of the Son of God. I exist because of the faith of the Son of God. And I do not set aside the grace of God because of the faith of the Son of God.

May the Lord impress upon us this hour, this very minute, in our souls, that we are crucified with Christ, that we live with Christ, that it is all of Christ's finished work and that the only way we can live in this life is by the faith of him, the Son of God, for the praise and glory of him.

Dear heavenly Father and most gracious and holy Lord, may you add your power and may you add your clarity and may you come to our souls. Lord, increase our faith. Increase our faith and, Lord, may that faith be the faith of thee and thee alone to the praise and glory of thy name. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.