

# Life

## Galatians 2:20

### Dr. Paul Cannings

#### A. Old Life (vs. 20a):

1. I have been crucified with Christ – Paul explains that the transformation he experienced was not based on the law but as a result of his belief in Christ death and resurrection. *“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”* (Rom. 6:3-4; NASU)
  - a) Basic to an understanding of this verse is the meaning of union with Christ. This doctrine is based on such passages as Romans 6:1-6 and 1 Corinthians 12:13, which explain that believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ and into the church, the body of all true believers. Having been thus united to Christ, believers share in His death, burial, and resurrection. Paul could therefore write, I have been “crucified with Christ” (lit., “I have been and am now crucified with Christ”).<sup>1</sup>
  - b) The phrase “crucified with Christ” (2:19) means identified with Christ in his death (Rom. 6:3–8) and thus freed from the authority and penalty of the law. The fact of the resurrection implies a new life—a life in perfect righteousness. Since this is the case, Paul could not see why one would return to trying to keep the law to gain righteousness that is already achieved in Christ. Paul was alert to anything that might void the necessity that Christ die on the cross. To nullify the grace of God was to assert that Christ died needlessly (see Gal. 5:11; 6:12–14).<sup>2</sup>
2. I have been crucified with Christ – Christ was crucified with our sin on Him so that when His crucifixion ended in death, the power of the flesh was broken. When the Holy Spirit entered our lives and quickened our spirit (Titus 3:4-8), living in the Spirit became a reality, giving us the power to overcome the influence of the flesh in our daily lives.
  - a) Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him (we still have to put it off, Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10), in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, (Romans 6:6-8; NASU)
    - The mind must be renewed (Romans 12:2).
    - The eyes need to be trained so that it does not darken the whole body (Job 31:1; Matt. 6:22-23).
    - The tongue can be a deadly poison (James 3:1-12).
    - How we work and serve with our hands must be holy (1 Tim. 2:8).
    - We must not be gluttonous, so our god becomes our belly (Phil. 3:18-19)

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lit. literal, literally

<sup>1</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:595). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 582). Tyndale House Publishers.

3. I have been crucified with Christ – Crucifying the flesh can be challenging, as Romans 7:14-25 clearly demonstrates. Yet the process of taking off the old man is ultimately a victorious experience, because of the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and empowers us to live according to God's will.

a) *"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."* (Romans 8:9-14; NASU)

b) *"And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."* (Phil. 3:9-11; NASU)

4. No longer I who live – Because the old man has been done away with, our daily life is now fully centered on the work of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:16-21; 5:18-21). Living each day is no longer determined by what we think, that only leads to death (Eph. 4:17-21). Nor is it determined by how we feel, because the flesh, still infected with sin (Gal. 5:19-21), must be put aside. Instead, our living must now be based on:

a) The renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2).  
 b) Obedience to the transforming Word of God (Hebr. 5:14).  
 c) Being consistent in wearing the armor (Eph. 6:13-17).  
 d) Developing a powerful prayer life (Eph. 6:18).  
 e) A commitment to serve in the church (Eph. 4:12-13).  
 f) A commitment to trust God and give. This manifest a life of faith establishing God to be Lord of our lives (2 Corinthians 9:10-13; Matt. 6:24).  
 g) The self-righteous, self-centered Saul died. Further, death with Christ ended Paul's enthronement of self; he yielded the throne of his life to Another, to Christ. But it was not in his own strength that Paul was able to live the Christian life; the living Christ Himself took up His abode in Paul's heart: Christ lives in me. Yet Christ does not operate automatically in a believer's life; it is a matter of living the new life by faith in the Son of God. It is then faith and not works or legal obedience that releases divine power to live a Christian life. This faith, stated Paul, builds on the sacrifice of Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. In essence Paul affirmed, "If He loved me enough to give Himself for me, then He loves me enough to live out His life in me."<sup>3</sup>

## B. New Life (vs. 20b):

<sup>3</sup>Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:595). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

1. But Christ lives – The more being crucified with Christ becomes a daily process, the more the transformation from the flesh to the work of the Holy Spirit leads to a life in which the character of Christ is being continually manifested in and through us. This is why Scripture declares, “....it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.....” (Gal. 2:20)
  - a) Gal. 5:24; 6:14) - Rom. 6:8-10 – As resurrection followed death in the experience of Christ, so the believer who dies with Christ is raised to a new quality of moral life here and now. Resurrection, in the sense of new birth, is already a present reality, and it increasingly exerts itself in the believer’s life.
    - Romans 6:10 – He died to sin once for all – In his death Christ (for the sake of sinners) submitted to the “reign” of sin (5:21); but his death broke the judicial link between sin and death, and he passed forever from the sphere of sin’s “reign.” Having been raised from the dead, he now lives forever to glorify God.
    - Sin should not reign because the Holy Spirit:
      - Poured into us (Titus 3:4-7).
      - The Holy Spirit convicts us (John 16:7-11).
      - He prays for us (Romans 8:26).
      - He reminds us of God’s Word (John 14:26).
      - He came to guide us into the truth which sets us free from the power of sin (John 16:13; 8:31-36).
      - He provides us strength to overcome the attacks of Satan (1 John 4:4).
2. The life I now live in the flesh – When Paul says the “*life I now in the flesh...*” he is referring to how he continuously lives out the principles in his day-to-day life experiences. “*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*” (Col 3:17; NASU)
3. I live by faith – His life, empowered by the Holy Spirit, was directed and controlled by his deep commitment and full surrender to rely with confidence on the divine Word of God. (Romans 10:17) This dependence strengthened Paul to remain steadfast in whatever the Lord called him to do (Phil. 3:12-16).
  - a) Christ’s resurrection power through the Spirit is worked out through the Christian (Rom. 6:4–11) who chooses to live by faith in the Son of God.<sup>4</sup> (Phil. 3:9-11)
  - b) Even the believer’s present life in mortal body, says Paul, is lived in faith-union with Christ, the Son of God (the textual variants are interesting but make no difference to the sense). Cf. Eph. 3:17, ‘that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith’ (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). This is not simply the exercise of faith in contrast to sight, as in 2 Cor. 5:7 where, so long as we are in mortal body, ‘we walk by faith (διὰ πίστεως), not by sight’, but faith as the bond of union with the risen Christ. To live by faith in this sense is tantamount to ‘living by the Spirit’ (5:25) which, as in Rom. 8:9–11, enables the believer even now to anticipate the life to come. This aspect of Paul’s teaching is characterized by E. P. Sanders as ‘participationist eschatology’ (PPJ, 549). See further E. Wissmann, *Das Verhältnis von ΠΙΣΤΙΣ und Christusfrömmigkeit bei Paulus* (Göttingen, 1926), 112.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson’s new illustrated Bible commentary* (Ga 2:20). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 144–145). W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

4. **Son of God** – The purpose of Paul living by faith was not to practice religion, but to establish a genuine life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ. As Paul declares, “*For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*” (Romans 8:14) He continues, “*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*” (Rom. 8:16-17; NASU) This is why we are now a part of God’s family (Eph. 3:15-16), no longer strangers or aliens, but fellow citizens (Eph. 2:19-20). It is for this very purpose Christ died (John 15:13). We are not merely practicing religion - we are now living in a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - a) The Son of God title has for him [Paul] the function of describing the greatness of the saving act of God who offered up the One closest to Him’ (E. Schweizer, *TDNT* VIII, 384, s.v. *υἱός*). Here, however, it is the active role of the Son of God that is emphasized: τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.<sup>6</sup>
5. **Who love me** – I am deeply humbled by the *agape* love of Christ. He loved the world (John 3:16)—a world that wanted nothing to do with Him (Romans 3:10–18). Yet His compassion was so great, as seen even in His mercy toward the thief on the cross, that He graciously included us in His eternal family.
  - a) The word for “love” here suggests unmerited, undeserved, self-giving love, while the word for “give” suggests Christ’s voluntary surrender of himself to die on the cross (compare Phps “sacrificed himself for me”; *NEB* “gave himself up for me”). This dying is now identified as a dying *for me*, that is, Christ’s act on the cross is intensely personal; it is as if He died for Paul alone, but there is nothing self-centered in Paul’s statement.
6. **Who love me** – The only reason our transformative process—outlined above—continues day by day is because when Christ saw us in our sinful and hopeless condition (Ephesians 2:12–15), He had compassion on us. By His own initiative, once and for all, He sacrificially gave His life so that the ministry of the Holy Spirit might deliver us from death to life. As a result of His sacrifice, we have been adopted into His family. All of this flows from the self-sacrificial, surrendering love of Christ.
7. **Gave Himself up for me; Deliver** - Christ allowed Judas to be among the twelve. Until the appointed time, as hatred grew among the Jewish leaders, they could not touch Him—because even on earth, He was still King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4), Christ obeyed God, even unto the most humiliating and cruel death imaginable (Philippians 2:6–11). He endured it all because it was God’s divine plan to redeem mankind and restore us to Himself.
8. **Gave Himself up for me; Deliver** - There is nothing in us that compelled Christ to come to earth. His coming was ONLY because “*God so loved the world*” (John 3:16). Through the second Adam (Romans 5:12–15), we now have the hope of redemption from the power of sin, enabling our transformation to be conformed to His image (2 Corinthians 3:18) and our adoption into the family of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce, F. F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 145). W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. Phps Phillips  
NEB New English Bible