

**"How Dead People Live"  
(Galatians 2:20)  
Pastor Peter Yi  
April 5th, 2009**

**Introduction:**

***TNIV Galatians 2:20***

*<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Today is Palm Sunday and this day in the life of Jesus Christ signifies the beginning of the week before his death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. This week is also known by Christians as Passion Week and the reason it's called that is because the root definition of the word 'passion' is to suffer. And this was the week where Christ suffered to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. So for Christians all around the world this is the most important week of our year. And for all of humankind, this is the most important week in Our history.

The Christian message is this. It starts with a dark reality that all people are sinners in thought and deed. And at the crux of sin is that the creator has rejected the Creator. We don't want his rule, his guidance, nor his love. And the bible teaches that the consequence of sin is death. This is the judgment that awaits all of us because we are sinners. As well, this judgment casts us into hell, away forever from the goodness and presence of God.

And what God did for this insurmountable dilemma, was that he made a way, an exit strategy, for us to receive forgiveness for our sins and escape judgment. He did this by sending his one and only Son Jesus Christ, who was 100% human and 100% God. He lived a perfect life, never ever sinning. And he suffered and died, and in doing so, he paid the penalty, in other words, he took upon himself the judgment for our sins.

So the bible says that we can be forgiven and that's incredibly good news. We can have our sins removed if only we believe, with all our heart, that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross to take upon himself the penalty for our sins. If you've never done that, I hope you will do that today. I hope you will embrace forgiveness and embrace Christ, and embrace the new life that he offers.

Most of you have already done that some time ago. And I hope for you, that you will rekindle your love, faith and obedience in Jesus today as we learn about the transformation that happened when we became Christians.

For many of us who are already Christians we have a general idea of what happened to us when we prayed for forgiveness, and invited Jesus to come into our lives, but we may not completely understand what has happened in the core of our beings as well as the changes that happened in our spiritual reality.

One way to understand what happens to a person when they become Christians is to look at the different words the bible uses to speak of salvation or becoming a Christian.

1. born again (John 3) – a new life

2. saved (rescued) – Jesus is called our Savior
3. converted – a change of allegiance
4. forgiven – meaning we are no longer condemned
5. to turn (from sin or evil to God) – a change of life direction from self to God, from disobedience to obedience.
6. new creation – we are re-created possessing a new nature and a new reality.
7. ransomed – meaning a price was paid to purchase our lives.

All of these different words give us a different nuance to what it means to become a Christian.

Galatians 2:20 is a great verse that tells us what it means to be a Christian. This verse concisely tells us the nature of what happened to us when we became Christians. For me this verse was one of the very first verse I memorized as a young Christian. I used to meditate on this verse over and over again while driving. And if called upon to give my favorite verse, it was always this one. And for me personally, it was this one, because it perfectly described what had happened in my life when I repented of my sins and asked Jesus to forgive me.

Listen to it again and see if it doesn't describe your experience.

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Let's try and unpack each part of this verse.

### **I have been crucified with Christ.**

For every single person who is a Christian, this statement, this truth, applies to them. We may have a tendency to think that the only person that died on the cross that day 2000 years ago was Jesus. But Paul in the verse tells us that when you and I became Christians, so incredibly tight was the unity that occurred between us and Jesus, that Paul has no other way to describe it than by saying we are "in Christ". In his writings this is his favorite way to describe our relationship with Jesus. It's one of these phrases that you could spend a month of quiet times on. It's a phrase that you can never grow tired of, because it so simply, but profoundly and deeply describes our relationship with Jesus. If you are a Christian, you are "in Christ."

The death of Christ on the cross was so powerful that it brought into the moment, into the event, people already dead and people not yet born. There is a great mystery to this. But so thorough, so once for all, was his death that it pulled in everyone who would receive Christ as their Lord and Savior. So Paul can write, even after the crucifixion even, and it applies to us right now, that when Christ died, we also died. When Christ was crucified, we too were crucified. This is how intimately we are 'in Christ'.

The mystery of this spiritual unity is not uncommon in the bible. For example the bible states that our current reality is that we are "seated with Christ in heaven." It doesn't say we will be seated with Christ in heaven, but that we are right now, currently, seated with Christ in heaven. Now, think about it, how is that possible given our bodies are here on earth? In some mysterious and spiritual way, our unity with Jesus is so tight and inseparable that not only were we with him when he died, but we were also raised with him in his resurrection and at the same time, we are residing with him in glory in heaven. Because we are "in Christ", we are where Christ is. Where

is Christ now? He is seated at the right hand of God. So if that is where Christ is, that is also where we are. There's a mystery about this, but nonetheless this is our current reality.

Listen to some parallel passages that also describe this unity.

**Colossians 2**

<sup>13</sup>When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup>having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

**Colossians 2:20**

<sup>20</sup>Since you died with Christ

**Colossians 3:1**

<sup>1</sup>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,

**Ephesians 2:4-7**

<sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

So, what part of us died on the cross when Jesus died? When Jesus died, he physically died. He gave up his breath. His heart stopped beating, but for us who were not even born, in what way did we die? The Colossians passage says that our sins died. They were nailed to that cross. Because it was for our sins that Christ died. He died for the billions, trillions of sins of people and every single one of those offensive sins were nailed to the cross.

But not only our sins, but also our sinful nature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says it like this.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

What's the old creation? It's our sinful nature. So radical was the transformation, that nothing short of a new creation occurred when we became Christians.

Perhaps the best passage that describes what happened is in Romans

**Rom 6:**

<sup>5</sup>If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

This is a great thing because no amount of human will. No amount of determination. No super cleansing agent can remove our old sinful natures. Scrub as hard as you like and the tattoo of that sin cannot be erased. Only by dying with Christ, by uniting with him, can we be transformed.

So that's the first half of the equation. I have been crucified with Christ. The other half of the equation is even more powerful.

**Because I have been crucified, because my old sinful nature has been nailed to the cross, the only logical conclusion is that "I no longer live."**

Isn't this true? This is true fully, but only partially realized in our experience. Why? Because we still live in a world where sin exists and until we die or enter heaven, whichever occurs first, we will still struggle with sin. We will still fail time and time again.

But what Paul is saying is that, though that may be true, though that is our daily experience, but the heavenly reality that sin is conquered, and sin is no longer our master, is ours now, though it will be fully realized later.

Instead who lives? **Christ, he lives in me.**

Now this is very important to understand. Because many of us think that becoming a Christian might be just to die to sin so that I may live again. Or some think that to be a Christian is merely to receive eternal life. And that's only part of the truth. What Jesus is saying in this verse is that Real life is Christ living in us. When we died with Christ, we were also raised with Christ, and now Christ dwells and lives within us.

Jesus, the Son of God, God himself resides in us. He lives in me. How unfathomable is that reality?! How can we not sense his presence? How can we not be led by his leadership? How can we continue in sin? It's because we haven't soaked in this truth. I am in Christ. And Christ is IN me.

**The logical conclusion to living a life where Christ lives in me, is that that life must be, can only be lived out in faith.**

If the transformation that happened was so radical, and it was all because of the death and resurrection of Christ, there is only one way to live out the rest of our lives here on earth. It must be by faith.

The problem with the Galatian Christians was that they understood that salvation was by faith and faith alone, but they thought living out the rest of your Christian life was by their own strength and their own power. It's like when we wrongly think that because the sacrifice of Jesus was so great and the salvation of our souls cost him so much, I have to live the rest of my life trying to "pay back" what he did. This is what the Galatian Christians were thinking and doing and this was the reason Paul wrote this letter, to tell them that your life in Christ began with faith when you received his forgiveness and lordship.

And every moment of your life after that must be lived out the same way—by faith—faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Never forget those last words, "Who loved me and gave himself for me." The life we live, in all that we do is for the one who loved me and gave himself for me. That must be our motivation.

### **Conclusion:**

For every Christian there is a past, and there is a present and there is a future. Our pasts were lived out of sync with God. Our pasts had someone other than God as our leader. And now, as Christians, that past is gone—and it's gone for good.

Because when we became Christians there was a violent struggle for our souls. And there had to take place a violent death of our old, sinful selves. There was nothing more the devil wanted than to keep that old self alive and there was nothing more Christ wanted than to kill and crucify that old self.

If a first century person were to read this letter and came across this verse for the first time and read the words, "I have been crucified with Christ" it would have sent chills up their spines. It

---

would have been like saying today, “I have been electrocuted with Christ” or “I have been gas-chambered with Christ” or “I have been lethally-injected with Christ.”

The crucifixion had a singular purpose – death – a slow and painful death. Sometimes people would be left on the cross for days. Sometimes birds would come and eat the flesh. But eventually the person would die, not from loss of blood, but from suffocation.

Christ went through this in his own physical body, so we would reap all the benefits of forgiveness, eternal life, of having God himself in Jesus Christ living in us.

