

# Living the Life of Christ

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. Galatians 2:20

There is perhaps no other single verse in all the Bible that states so clearly the truth of Christ's life living in believers in the Age of Grace. While most of professing Christendom seeks to make their lives more "Christ-like" this verse presents a totally different path. God's desire is not to make your life more Christ-like. Rather, he has crucified your life and given you the life of Christ. Living the life of Christ does not make your life more Christ-like but allows the life of Christ that God has placed within you to live out through your body of flesh. There is all the difference in the world between trying to make your life like Christ's life and living the life of Christ. Our goal is not to make our life like His; it is to live His life in our flesh.

## **The Trouble in Galatia**

As Paul opened his letter to the Galatians, he wasted no time identifying the problem that existed in the churches of Galatia.

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. Galatians 1:6,7

The gospel preached in Galatia was not another gospel. That is, it did not deny the necessity of faith in Christ. It was however, a perversion of the true gospel of Christ in that it added something to faith in Christ. Getting to the heart of the Galatians' problem in chapter 2, Paul refers to a meeting with Peter and the other apostles and elders of Israel. The reason for that meeting is recorded in Acts 15 and reveals exactly how the gospel of Christ was perverted.

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. Acts 15, 1,2

The teachers of the law in Judea added circumcision to the simple message of faith in Christ. They used circumcision as a test of whether or not a person was truly saved. Paul's first step to combat this error was to affirm his authority as the Apostle of the Gentiles, to speak authoritatively on the matter.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11,12

After meeting with Paul in Jerusalem the Jewish leaders agreed that Paul's message was the gospel to be preached in the Age of Grace and that circumcision had no place in that message. Paul gives his account of their agreement in Galatians 2.

But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Galatians 2:6-9

The book of Galatians was written by Paul to inform the churches of Galatia of the facts stated above. Paul expanded his discussion of circumcision to include a discussion of the law in general. (See Galatians 5:3.) He expanded even beyond the bounds of the letter of the Mosaic Law to discuss all works of the flesh. (See Galatians 3:3.)

Paul's conclusion about circumcision therefore is applicable to all the commandments of the law and to any work of the flesh.

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. Galatians 5:2,4

This conclusion keeps with Paul's instructions to the church at Colossi.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Colossians 2:14-17

The perversion so evident in Paul's day still persists in the Body of Christ. Today it may not take the form of circumcision, but there are many that judge a person's salvation by their actions. Many today say that if you haven't followed the Lord in baptism, they question the reality of your profession of faith. Still others warn that if you have not left the vices of alcohol and cigarettes behind you had better examine the sincerity of your faith. All of these admonitions repeat the perversion of the gospel that was causing problems in Galatia and preventing believers from truly living the life of Christ.

## **Cursed by the Blessing**

To understand what it means to be delivered from the bondage of the law, we must first understand what made the law an instrument of bondage. Why does Paul refer to the law as a "yoke of bondage?"

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be

circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Galatians 5:1-3

On the surface it seems that having the law was a great blessing. In the law Israel had righteous commandments that no other nation on earth had. This is what made them a special and separated nation.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Deuteronomy 4:5-8

The curse of the law however, was the fact that it was not enough to simply have the law. Once Israel was instructed from the law it was also necessary that they *do* the commandments of the law.

And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us. Deuteronomy 6:24,25

God's commandment is clear. In order to be righteous, Israel had to *do* the commandments and statutes of the law. It is this need to *do* the law that Paul reveals as the curse of the law.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Galatians 3:10

That which was a great blessing to Israel became a curse when they could not perform it. The blessing of knowing God's will became a curse when they could not do the will that had been revealed to them. This curse is in no way the fault of the law. The law is good and holy and just. (See Romans 7:12.) It is man that is at fault. It is the weakness of our flesh that made it impossible for Israel to keep God's holy law.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. . . Romans 8:3a

For finding fault with them [the people of Israel], he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Hebrews 8:8

If the law can never be kept, why then was it given? Paul answers this question in his letter to the Romans.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:19, 20

Every time God's law is violated it demonstrates the sinfulness of man. The law can never save. It can only condemn.

Living under the law is a curse and bondage because it

requires you to be constantly striving toward a goal that you can never reach. You can never rest when living under a law-based system. You must spend your entire life trying to be something that you are not and can never be – perfectly righteous.

### **Land of the Living Dead**

Since we have no hope of keeping God's law, and therefore the law can only condemn us, how can we ever hope to have our service accepted by God? Again, it is in Paul's epistle to the Romans that we find the answer to this question.

For he that is dead is freed from sin. Romans 6:7

In this one short verse Paul reveals the key to deliverance from the curse of the law. The key is to die! If the purpose of the law is to point out our sin, and we are freed from sin then the purpose for the law no longer exists and we are no longer under the law's curse. Therefore, in order to be freed from the law all we have to do is die! Simple isn't it. Simple in principle, yes, but not so simple in its execution. How can we ever pay the penalty that would free us from sin and the law and yet have life? The answer is that *we* can't, but God provided a way to accomplish this *for us through* Christ.

The moment we place our faith in the work of Christ at Calvary as the complete payment for our sins the Holy Spirit performs a marvelous work.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 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. Romans 6:3-6

To identify us completely with Christ the Spirit makes us part of His death, burial, and resurrection. All that we were is crucified with Christ and the life that we now have is the life of Christ. This is the truth that Paul expresses as he writes to the churches of Galatia in Galatians 2:20 (quoted above).

We are dead to the law by identification with the death of Christ. The flesh in which we were held has been crucified with Christ and we are now free from all of the guilt and condemnation of the law. The law can no longer declare us guilty because our death, in Christ, satisfied the ultimate demand of the law.

Paul elaborates on this marvelous principle of receiving both death and life in his epistle to the Colossians.

For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; Colossians 2:9-14

In this passage is the two-fold process that identifies us with Christ and makes us "complete in him." We are

circumcised with a spiritual circumcision to free us from the body of flesh. This is the death that Paul speaks of in Romans 6. We are then baptized with a spiritual baptism that unites us eternally with Christ. This is the source of the new life spoken of by Paul in Romans 6.

This two-fold process is the source of our liberty. We have been freed from the flesh, sin, and the law and given a brand new life in Christ. This gives us a position of absolute liberty. Not liberty to sin, but liberty to serve. It is this liberty to serve that Paul explains to the Galatians.

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

Being crucified with Christ frees us from the curse and condemnation of the law. Our crucified life is then replaced with the resurrection life of Christ. This allows us to serve God and one another in newness of life.

### **Victory Over Sin**

The key step to overcome sin in our lives is to believe what God's Word says about us. Scripture works in our lives only when we believe it.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. I Thessalonians 2:13

Paul writes that the Word of God works in those that believe. Simply knowing the verses in our heads is not enough. We must believe that what they say is true. This is how the written Word (Scripture) works with the living Word (Jesus Christ) who dwells in us to allow us to live the life of Christ.

We are also greatly helped in overcoming sin if we understand how sin attacks. John explains in his first epistle how sin attacks through the world system. He also tells us exactly where those attacks take place. With this information, we can prepare ourselves to fend off the attacks when they come.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. I John 2:16

All that is in the world is evil. That evil seeks to influence us through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

Fortunately (and certainly not coincidentally), God gave us, in the writings of Paul, a resource to deal specifically with each of the areas of temptation through which Satan attacks. For each of the ways that sin attacks God has given us a passage of Scripture to defend against the attack and gain victory over the sin.

The lust of the flesh –

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Galatians 5:24

When the world's attack is through the lust of the flesh Paul reminds us that our flesh has been crucified with Christ and therefore has no more hold on us. If we allow the flesh and its lusts to control us, we are literally allowing a dead man to run our lives.

This gives a whole new meaning to the lusts of our flesh. They are merely the meaningless desires of a dead man.

The lust of the eyes –

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the

things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal II Corinthians 4:18

When the attack is through the lust of the eyes, Paul tells us that we should be looking at things not seen because they are things of eternal value. In other words, anything that we can see with our eyes is temporary and will soon be gone. Only the things that are unseen are eternal and have lasting value in our lives and in our service for the Lord. This perspective allows us to look at things around us in a whole new light. The things that entice our eyes to stray seem much less appealing when we realize their temporary nature.

The pride of life –

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8

If Satan's attack comes through the avenue of pride, we are admonished to have the attitude that Christ had when He humbled himself and became obedient unto death. What greater cure could there be for pride than to realize that Christ, who had every right to glory in His position as God, chose rather to suffer the pain and humiliation of the cross? He esteemed our need as more important than His position. This is truly the heart of a servant and should be the heart attitude of every believer in the Age of Grace.

Knowing, believing, and acting on the verses above will give us victory over sin in our lives.

### **Living the Life of Christ**

Attempting to adhere to a set of rules, no matter how well intentioned never allows us to live the life of Christ. We must believe about ourselves what the Scriptures say and act accordingly. This walk of faith is the only way that we can allow the life of Christ to live through our bodies of flesh.

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