

Studies in Galatians (6/22)

The Ever-Present Cross.*Galatians 2:17-21; 3:1*

Our last lesson in Galatians, closing with verse 16 of the second chapter, showed us that men are saved only by faith in Christ, and that faith in Him is a personal matter. It is by "the faith of Christ," His own personal faith, and no other, that we are justified; and this faith of Christ we get by receiving Christ Himself. Believing in Christ is receiving Him; and when Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and is thus recognized as Lord, He exercises the faith which alone is able to save; for

The Law Can Not Justify.—"By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2:16. Shall we say, "Then we will away with the law"? That is what every confirmed criminal thinks. Persistent law breakers would gladly do away with the law which declares them guilty and will not say that wrong is right. But the law of God can not be abolished, for it is the statement of the will of God. Rom. 2:18. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. 7:12. We read the law, and find in it our duty made plain. But we have not done it; therefore we are guilty. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "There is none that does good; no, not one." Rom. 3:23, 12. Moreover, there is not one who has strength to do the law, its requirements are so great. Then it is very evident that no one can be justified by the works of the law, and it is equally evident that the fault is not in the law, but in the individual. Let the man get Christ in the heart by faith, and then the righteousness of the law will be there also, for Christ says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Ps. 40:8. He who would throw away the law because it will not call evil good, would reject God, because He "will by no means clear the guilty." Ex. 34:7. But God will remove the guilt, will make the sinners righteous, that is, in harmony with the law, and then the law which before condemned them will witness to their righteousness.

Lesson for the Week

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 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. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" Gal. 2:17-21; 3:1.

What Was Destroyed?—"If I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor." R.V. We ask again, What was destroyed, the building up of which will prove us to be transgressors? Remembering that the apostle is talking of those who have believed in Jesus Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, we find the answer to the question in Rom. 6:6: "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." Also Col. 2:10, 11: "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." That which is destroyed is the body of sin, and it is destroyed only by this personal faith of Christ. It is destroyed in order that we may not serve sin. But now if, after having believed in Christ, we put our trust in something else, it is evident that that which was destroyed by faith is built up by lack of it, and so we are found transgressors through our own fault; for Christ is not the minister of sin, but of righteousness.

"Dead to the Law."—Many seem to fancy that "dead to the law" means the same as that the law is dead. Not by any means. The law must be in full force, else there could be no death to it. How does a man become dead to the law?—By receiving its full penalty, which is death. He is dead, but the law which put him to death is still as ready as ever to put to death another criminal. Suppose now that the man who was executed for gross crimes, should by some miraculous power come to life again, would he not still be dead to the law?—Certainly; nothing that he had done could be mentioned to him by the law; but if he should again commit crimes, the law would again execute him, but as another man. Now Paul says that he through the law is dead to the law, that he might live unto God. By the body of Christ he is raised from the death which he has suffered from the law because of his sin, and now he walks "in newness of life," a life unto God. Like Saul of old, he is by the Spirit of God "turned into another man." 1 Sam. 10:6. That this is the case is shown by what follows.

Crucified with Christ.—"I am crucified with Christ," says Paul; "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ was crucified; He was "delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:25. But unless we are crucified with Him, His death and resurrection profit us nothing. If the cross of Christ is separated from us, and outside of us, even though it be but a moment of time and an hair's breadth of space, it is to us all the same as if He were not crucified. No one was ever saved simply by looking forward to a cross to be erected and a Christ to be crucified at some indefinite time in the future, and no one can now be saved simply by believing that at a certain time in the past Christ was crucified. No; if men would see Christ crucified, they must look neither forward nor backward, but upward; for the arms of the cross that was erected on Calvary, reach from

Paradise lost to Paradise restored, and cover the entire world. But let us note particularly in the following paragraphs how it is that Christ must be crucified in every soul that derives any real benefit from the sacrifice.

Sin a Personal Matter.—Christ was delivered for our offenses. He “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” 1 Peter 2:24. He bears the sins of the world. John 1:29. But every man is guilty only of the sins which he himself has committed. Now I do not sin where I am not, but where I am. Sin is in the heart of man: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within.” Mark 7:21-23. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Jer. 17:9. Others have sinned as well as I; but their sin is not mine, and I do not have to answer for it. What I need is freedom from my own personal sin,—that sin which not only has been committed by me personally, but which dwells in the heart,—the sin which constitutes the whole of my life.

What I Can Not Do.—I can not free myself from sin. “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” Prov. 5:22. “For tho thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord.” Jer. 2:22. My sin is committed by myself, in myself, and I can not separate it from me. Cast it on the Lord? Ah, yes, that is right, but how? Can I gather it up in my hands, and cast it from me, so that it will light upon Him?—I can not. If I could separate it but a hair’s breadth from me, then I should be safe, no matter what became of it, since it would not be found in me. In that case I could dispense with Christ; for if sin were not found on me, it would make no matter to me where it was found. I should be clear. But no works of any kind that I can do can save me; therefore, all my efforts to separate myself from my sins are unavailing.

Christ Bears the Sin in Us.—It is evident from what has been said that whoever bears my sins must come where I am, yea, must come into me. And this is just what Christ does. Christ is the Word, and to all sinners, who would excuse themselves by saying that they can not know what God requires of them, He says, “The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” Deut. 30:11-14. Therefore, He says, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Rom. 10:9. What shall we confess about the Lord Jesus?—Why, confess the truth, that He is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, and believe that He is there risen from the dead. “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” Eph. 4:9. The risen Saviour is the crucified Saviour. So as Christ risen is in the heart of the sinner, so also is

Christ crucified there. If it were not so, there would be no hope for any. A man may believe that Jesus was crucified eighteen hundred years ago, and may die in his sins; but he who believes that Christ is crucified and risen in him, has salvation.

What a glorious thought that wherever sin is, there is Christ, the Saviour from sin! He bears sin, all sin, the sin of the world. Sin is in all flesh, and so Christ is come in the flesh. Christ is crucified in every man that lives on earth. This is the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation, which is to be proclaimed to all.

Living by Faith.—In the tenth chapter of Romans, as already noted, we learn that Christ is in every man, “a very present help in trouble.” He is in the sinner, in order that the sinner may have every incentive and facility for turning from sin to righteousness. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6. There is no other life than His. He is *the life*. But, although He is in every man, not every man has His righteousness manifested in his life; for some “hold down the truth in unrighteousness.” Rom. 1:18, R.V. Now Paul’s inspired prayer was that we might be strengthened with might by the Spirit of God in the inner man, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; ... that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Eph. 3:16-19. The difference, then, between the sinner and the Christian is this, that, whereas Christ crucified and risen is in every man, in the sinner He is there unrecognized and ignored, while in the Christian He dwells there *by faith*.

Christ is crucified in the sinner, for wherever there is sin and the curse, there is Christ bearing it. All that is needed now is for the sinner to be crucified with Christ, to let Christ’s death be his own death, in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal flesh. Faith in the eternal power and Divinity of God, that are seen in all the things that He has made, will enable any one to grasp this mystery. The seed is not quickened “except it die.” 1 Cor. 15:36. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit.” John 12:24. So the one who is crucified with Christ, begins at once to live, but it is as another man. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

The Life of the World.—“But Christ was actually crucified eighteen hundred years, and more, ago, was He not?”—Certainly. “Then how can it be that my personal sins were upon Him? or how can it be that I am now crucified with Him?” Well, it may be that we can not understand the fact, but that makes no difference with the fact. But when we remember that Christ is *the life*, even “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (1 John 1:2), we may understand something of it. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men,”—“the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:4, 9. The scene on Calvary was the manifestation of what has taken place as long as sin has existed, and will take place until every man is saved who is willing to be saved,—Christ bearing the sins of the world. He bears them now. One act of death and resurrection was

sufficient for all time, for it is eternal life that we are considering; therefore, it is not necessary for the sacrifice to be repeated. That life pervades and upholds all things, so that whoever accepts it by faith has all the benefit of the entire sacrifice of Christ. By Himself He "made purification of sins." Whoever rejects the life, or is unwilling to acknowledge that the life which he has is Christ's life, loses, of course, the benefit of the sacrifice.

The Faith of the Son of God.—Christ lived by the Father. John 6:57. His faith in the word that God gave Him was such that He repeatedly and positively maintained that when He died He should rise again the third day. In this faith He died, saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." Luke 23:46. That faith which gave Him the victory over death (Heb. 5:7), because it gave Him the complete victory over sin, is the faith which He exercises in us, when He dwells in us *by faith*; for He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." It is not we that live, but Christ that lives in us, and uses His own faith to deliver us from the power of Satan. "What have we to do?"—*Let Him* live in us in His own way. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." How can we let Him? Simply by acknowledging Him, by confessing Him.

The Gift for Me.—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." How personal this is. I am the one whom He loved. Each soul in the world can say, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." Leave Paul out of the question in reading this. Paul is dead, but the words that he wrote are yet alive. It was true of Paul, but no more so than of every other man. They are the words which the Spirit puts in our mouths, if we will but receive them. The whole gift of Christ is for each individual me. Christ is not divided, but every soul gets the whole of Him, just the same as if there were not another person in the world. Each one gets all the light that shines. The fact that there are millions of people for the sun to shine upon, does not make its light any the less for me; I get the full benefit of it, and could not get more if I were the only person in the world. It shines for me. So Christ gave Himself for me, the same as if I were the only sinner in the world; and the same is true of every other sinner. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Christ Not Dead in Vain.—"I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If righteousness came by the law, then there would have been no use for the death of Christ. The law itself can do nothing except point out men's duty; therefore to speak of righteousness coming by the law, means by our works, by our individual effort. So the text is equivalent to the statement that if we could save ourselves; Christ died for nothing; for salvation is the one thing to be gained. Well, we can not save ourselves; and Christ is not dead in vain; therefore there is salvation in Him. He is able to save all that come unto God by Him. Some must be saved, else He has died in vain. So the promise is sure: "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of

the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Isa. 53:10, 11. "Whosoever will" may be of the number. Since He died not in vain, see to it "that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

Christ Crucified before Us.—"Who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?" R.V. The first part of the verse, concerning witchcraft, we shall leave until next week. What we are now concerned with is that Jesus was set forth before the Galatians, when Paul preached to them, as openly crucified before their eyes. So vivid was the presentation that they could actually see Christ crucified. It was not skilful word painting on the part of Paul, nor imagination on the part of the Galatians, for then it would have been only deception. No; it was an actual fact; Christ was there, crucified, before their eyes, and Paul by the Spirit enabled them to see Him. We know that it was not Paul's skill in making beautiful word pictures that enabled them to fancy that they saw the crucifixion, for elsewhere Paul says that he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that he purposely and carefully refrained from using the wisdom of words, for fear that he should make the cross of Christ without effect. 1 Cor. 1:17, 18; 2:1-4. Christ is crucified before us, and each blade of grass, each leaf in the forest, reveals the fact. Yea, we have the testimony in our own bodies. Many there are who can testify that it is something more than a figure of speech, when the apostle says that Christ was crucified before the eyes of the Galatians. They have had the experience. God grant that this study of Galatians, before it is finished, may be the means of opening the eyes of many more, so that they may see Christ crucified before their eyes, and know Him crucified in them and for them.

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