

Not I but Christ

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Galatians 2:20

This simple but profound statement sums up the promise of the New Covenant, the purpose of Christ's Atonement and the power of Christ's gospel. This is the gospel that Jesus Christ revealed to the apostle Paul and this is the gospel that Paul spent his life proclaiming (see 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5; Galatians 1:11-16; Ephesians 3:8-10; and Colossians 1:25-29). In the middle of this verse, Paul defines the Christian life as "I no longer live but Christ lives in me." This can be summarized as "not I but Christ." Take a moment to reflect on these four words "not I but Christ." Such a life is the clearest witness of Jesus Christ the world could ever see. This should be the Christian life we aspire to live. Here Paul declares not only can Christ fully live His life in us, he provides two conditions for us to experience this divine life.

The first condition is found at the beginning of the verse and the second one is at the end. The first condition is to know "I have been crucified with Christ." This is the secret to living the Christian life. Before we can hope to live such a life, we must know our sinful nature has been crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). This is crucial. We needed forgiveness from the penalty of our sins but we also needed deliverance from the power of our sin nature. Christ's death has provided full provision for both our forgiveness and our deliverance. Since we came into sin by birth, we could only be freed from sin by our death (Romans 6:7). However, we could not put ourselves to death; therefore God has crucified us with Christ. When Christ died, we died and God performed a divine heart transplant and replaced our terminally sin-sick heart with His Son's divine heart. However, the death of our sin nature will never become real to us by our will or

effort but only when we believe we have already died in Christ. Our sinful nature has once and for all time been executed and removed. That wretched self-centered "I" whom we loathed has died and been buried (Romans 6:3-6). This is the Biblical truth. But if we don't know the truth, then we cannot be set free from sin (John 8:32). That's why Paul said, "Do you not know you have died to sin... for he who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:2-3,7)."

The knowledge that we have died with Christ can only be seen by God's divine revelation opening our spiritual eyes. If we do not know we have already died with Christ, we will mistakenly try to live the Christian life by the best of our ability. We may think God will honor our dedication and meet our effort halfway to help us. However, God's way is not to help our natural man do the work of the Spirit. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6)." Only the Spirit gives life; our soul has no power to overcome sin (John 6:63). God's way to permanently deal with our sins was to remove the sinner (the sin factory) from within us and substitute Christ in his place. When we know we have died, then who is left? Only Christ is left. Just as Paul said, "I no longer live but Christ lives in me." Christ has now become our identity (Colossians 3:3-4).

The second condition for experiencing God's ordained life of "not I but Christ" is found at the end of the verse: "The life which I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God." Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not yet seen (Hebrews 11:1). Although we know our salvation required no work on our part, we mistakenly think our sanctification depends on our best effort. However, the Christian life is not one of trying but of trusting, for the Bible says, "The righteous one will live by faith (Romans 1:17)." By faith, we work out our salvation and substantiate God's truth that we died in Christ and Christ now lives in us. We are freed from sin's power the same way we know

our sins are forgiven - by believing God's Word. "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11)."

Knowing we have already died in Christ, we acknowledge we are inadequate and incapable. We no longer try to live the Christian life by our own strength but we trust Jesus Christ to live His life in us. We believe Jesus is all we need - He has become our wisdom, our righteousness, and our sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). We stand firm by faith in the glorious truth that our old man of sin is gone and Christ now lives in us despite the accusing lies of that deceiver, the devil. The Holy Spirit then confirms and establishes this powerful liberating reality in our life until Christ is fully formed in us (Galatians 4:19; 1 Peter 5:8-10). Knowing we have died and Christ lives in us, we present ourselves each day as a living and holy vessel for God's use (Romans 12:1-2). We gladly yield our soul-life (our natural attitudes, affections and abilities) to His Sovereignty so His life might be manifest in us (Mark 8:34-35). For the joy of knowing Christ and the desire to lay down our lives for the brethren and by faith in what He has done, we resist the carnal desires that wage war against our soul (1 Peter 2:11; 4:1-2). We refuse to act independently apart from Christ's authority (John 5:19, 30; 15:5). Instead, we rest by faith in Christ's completed work on the cross. We then wholeheartedly take whatever action Jesus Christ initiates in us by relying on "His power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20)."

Jesus Christ died in our place and since we also died in Him, He wants to live in our place. Thus the first step for us to experience a life of "not I but Christ" is to know we have died in Christ. The next step is to trust Jesus Christ to sovereignly live in us. May God give us divine revelation to know Jesus Christ and all He has accomplished on the cross so we might grow into the fullness of His Son (Ephesians 4:13).

"For to me, to live is Christ." Philippians 1:21