

Crucified With Christ • Galatians 2:19-21

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Backfire*

1. A duck hunter was with a friend in a wide-open area of southeastern Georgia
2. Far away on the horizon he noticed a cloud of smoke but thought nothing of it
3. Not long after, the wind shifted and soon he could hear the sound of crackling
4. He realized the terrible truth: a brushfire was advancing so fast they couldn't outrun it.
5. Rifling through his pockets, he found what he was looking for - a book of matches.
6. He lit a small fire around them.
 - a. working quickly, they fanned the little flames outward, extinguishing them as soon as they had burnt the brush, but before they could get too high
 - b. soon they were standing in a circle of blackened earth, waiting for the raging brushfire to come.
 - c. they didn't have to wait long.
7. They covered their mouths and noses with handkerchiefs and braced themselves.
8. The fire roared near -- and swept over them.
9. But they were completely unhurt, untouched.
10. Fire would not pass where fire had already been

B. *The Law*

1. The law is like a brushfire - We cannot escape it
2. But if we stand in the burned over place, not a hair of our heads will be singed
3. The Cross of Calvary *is* that burned-over place - There we huddle, safe from the power of the law

II. TEXT

A. *Galatians 2:19-20*

{19} "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

{20} "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

{21} "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

1. In order to rightly understand what Paul writes here, we need to understand the context
2. The Galatians were being troubled by false teachers, a group of guys known as the Judaizers
 - a. these guys taught that while we are saved by grace through faith in Christ

- b. we then go on to perfection by a life of *works*
 - c. faith gets the ball rolling, but works keeps it rolling
 - d. they are called *Judaizers* because the works they taught were essential for maintaining one's salvation were the entire law of Moses
 - e. not just the moral dimension of the law but the ritual parts too
 - 1) circumcision
 - 2) observing the Sabbath
 - 3) and all the feasts and festivals
3. But Paul, who was the Galatians' spiritual father and mentor, knew there could be no blending of grace and works
 4. So in his most strongly worded letter, he sternly rebuked the Galatians for their error in so quickly turning away from the gospel they had originally so joyously received
 5. The last 3 verses of chapter 2 define for us some of the most important truths of the Christian life
 6. And because of that, we should pay them special attention
 7. You see, despite Paul's clear denunciation of the Judaizers and their teaching in Galatians, their error is alive and well in the Church today
 8. Where ever you hear the message that your religion and relationship with God is based on what you do, rather than what He has done, you have the error the Judaizers
 - a. where ever you find rules and regulations about such things as dress or dancing, or going to this place or that, you have the message of the Judaizers
 - b. where ever the issue is make up, or hemlines, or something as innocuous as chewing gum, we're back to Galatia
 - c. if attendance at movies or playing cards means you are surely headed for hell on a greased poll - then the Judaizers are at work
 - d. even more subtly, when it's communicated that *real* Christians are the ones who spend so much time every day in bible study and prayer, or who tithe, or who are involved in ministry, or who are present at 3 meetings a week - then guess what? Hello the Judaizers
 9. Paul couldn't be more clear in this letter
 - a. our relationship with God is not based on what we do
 - b. it's based on what He has done
 - c. does it matter what we do?
 - d. of course - but not to the issue of our *standing before* and *relationship with* God
 10. Contrary to what the Judaizers were saying,
 - a. we are not saved by *grace* - and then go on by *works*
 - b. we do not start with *faith* and then move on to *effort*
 - c. what began in grace, received by faith, goes on and is brought to completion by grace through faith
 11. Note carefully how Paul says it here

B. V. 19

{19} “For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

1. For the follower of Christ, there are two periods in our lives -
 - a. BC and AD
 - b. Before Christ & After His Dominion
2. Our lives BC were marked by sin and rebellion against God, both overt and subtle
3. The Law of God as revealed in the Law given to Moses showed the true nature of our sin and the corruption of our inner being
 - a. we realized the law was right and good -
 - b. but we found we were unable to keep that law
 - c. and the just penalty was death!
4. So the law doesn't so much inspire us to righteousness as it does provoke us to act out the rebellion that already lives inside
 - a. for instance; when I was about 11, my parents took a vacation and came out to California from the Mid west
 - b. we visited Knotts Berry Farm and of course I had a ball
 - c. at one ride, there were "Wet Paint" signs all over the fence rails that marked off the lines you were to stand in
 - d. I had been standing in lines for a good part of the day, and never felt the urge to touch the fences
 - e. we did of course; we'd been leaning against them and putting our hands on them all day - but I never even *thought* about it
 - f. now, standing in line, and seeing the signs, I noticed how shiny and smooth the paint was
 - g. it glistened and sparkled, and if I listened closely enough, it beckoned to me
 - h. "Lance - touch me!"
 - i. and of course, I did, and left my dirty fingerprint in the tacky surface of the paint
5. I was a good boy - an obedient lad, at least in comparison to many of my peers
6. But the standard by which our lives are measured is not the relative one of standing side by side with other men and women
7. The standard by which all of us are measured and measured equally is the Law of God
8. And all of us know, that deep down inside, we are rebels
9. The law, like those wet cement signs, provokes us
10. Once provoked, we are judged and found guilty - and the punishment is death!
11. So Paul says that under the dominion of law, we die
12. But after we have died to the law, we can live to God
13. How? How can we pass from under the law's tyrannical provocation of sin!

C. v. 20

{20} “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

1. Here's how we can die to the law and live toward God - by faith in Christ

2. This verse, packed as it is with paradoxes, stands as one of the defining passages of the Christian faith

I have been crucified with Christ;

3. What does Paul mean? How has he been crucified with Christ? In what way?
4. The tense Paul uses here indicates that he sees himself as having died with Christ on the cross in the past so that the life he is now living is fundamentally different than the life he lived before the Cross
5. In other words, the moment Paul came to faith in Jesus, the moment he realized and repented of his sin and placed his personal trust in Christ, it was like Paul was on that Cross
6. Jesus was his genuine substitute, but in a way that actually ended something for Paul
7. What it ended was a law governed and condemned life
8. What it killed was the inner rebellion
9. So Paul says, "**I have been crucified with Christ**"
 - a. when Jesus died, the old Paul died
 - b. so that the new Paul is different and the life he now lives is a different life

It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;

10. This isn't merely pious religiosity talking - Paul is being sincere
11. He means that because of the Cross and the Resurrection, his life now isn't lived under the law and the self-effort the law demands
12. What gives him life now, what energizes him, what fills him with purpose and passion is Christ
13. Now, how does he live this new life? What is the difference between Paul's life BC and AD?

And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

14. The new life is a life of faith!
15. It's as he continued to look to Jesus as he had when he was first saved, that he finds life
16. The old life was one of self-effort - the new life is lived by faith
17. The old life was governed by law - the new life is enabled by grace!
18. Paul is saying here that he has made a choice to not only let Jesus be his substitute on the Cross, but to let Jesus sub for him now in this life
 - a. rather than Paul's self living on the front line -
 - b. he has backed out of the way and let Jesus who live within, step up and animate his life
19. The current trend - WWJD
 - a. this is how Paul lived
 - b. but even more than the way it is presented today
 - c. not just the question then emulation
 - d. Paul is saying, I'll just get out of the way and let Jesus live through me
 - e. for Paul it was IWLJDI - I will let Jesus do it!

D. V. 21

{21} “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

18. Paul deals the death blow to the error of the Judaizers
19. If righteousness comes through our own self effort, then Jesus died in vain
20. The cross ought to prove once and for all that works cannot attain salvation!
21. The righteousness Paul refers to in v. 21 speaks not only of the legal clearing of our guilt before God but also of the daily and practical righteousness which ought to mark the life of every believer
22. And Paul is clear, just as the forgiveness of our sins is a faith issue, so is our growth in grace
23. Practical righteousness is not to be attained by self-effort and coming up with our own set of rules and regulations
24. It is found by continuing to look to Christ by faith
25. Let's read on into chapter 3

1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

E. Growing

1. For how many of us does this verse apply today?
2. How many of us have begun so well in the Spirit, but have turned away from Him to our own devices and self-effort?
3. We would agree with the best of them that salvation is by grace through faith
 - a. we would weigh in in the debate between the cult of works and the gospel of grace
 - b. and with great and mighty arguments we'd defend the Faith
 - c. but in the quiet of our own lives we place our relationship with God on the fervency of our own devotion toward Him
 - d. when we feel dry or distant from the Lord we chalk it up to the fact that we haven't read or prayed
 - e. and so we set our course to enter back into the intimacy with God we've known in the past by being better - by being more diligent to go to church, read our bibles, and be a better witness
 - f. these are certainly all good things - but they put the focus on us, on our efforts, on what we are doing to draw near to God
4. My beloved brother and sister, lay aside your efforts
5. Set down your preoccupation with what you must do
6. And simply be reminded what He has done for you
7. It all begins with a turning of your heart back to the Lord in faith
8. Remember the Cross and it's eternal message - God will invade time and move space to come to US!
9. This is what Paul means when he says,

{20} “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;

and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

10. Do not strive to be better, get out of the way and let Christ be better in you
11. Stop trying to grow, get out of the way and let Christ live through you and the growth will happen
12. In all your struggles and challenges, yield to Jesus and let Him take control, instead of you trying to steer the course of your own life through the troubled waters
13. Give the wheel to him!
14. Let me use an example
 - a. Fred and Mary were having real problems in their marriage
 - b. a lot of hurts had built up over the years and they were pretty much always going at it verbally
 - c. both hated it and wanted it to stop but no matter how hard they tried, things only got worse
 - d. as believers they especially knew things were wrong and needed correction, but neither seemed willing to give in, though both wanted a change desperately!
 - e. one day, after a really bad fight that morning, Mary read Galatians 2:20 and it hit her like a ton of bricks
 - f. it was like the Lord was speaking directly to her
 - g. so she prayed and asked the Lord to live through her in her marriage
 - h. she realized the harder she tried to make things happen the worse it got
 - i. She decided that when Fred got home she would just back out of the way and let Jesus live through her - she didn't know how it would work, but the Lord had clearly spoken to her through this verse
 - j. when Fred got home, he seemed intent on renewing the argument
 - k. but Mary, who had decided to wear an outfit she knew he really liked, just listened to him without reaction.
 - l. as she listened, waiting to see what Jesus would do, she felt a clean peace descend on her
 - m. she didn't have to say or do anything she realized - Jesus would take care of things
 - n. Fred went on for a while, but when he saw that Mary wasn't screwing up her face in a look of "You idiot!" he began to mellow
 - o. when he realized she wasn't going to say anything at all as a reaction to him, he paused and asked - "Are you okay?"
 - p. this was so unlike her!
 - q. and suddenly Fred realized how worked up he was and how he was really out of control
 - r. he began to feel like a heel in the face of her quiet composure
 - s. now Mary wanted so badly to tell Fred what was going on, but the Spirit stopped her
 - t. she realized it might sound preachy and holier than thou to him
 - u. why not just be silent and continue to let Jesus live through her
 - v. so she told him that she had been thinking about what he had said and

- wanted to work toward a resolution - but why not leave it till later?
- w. right now, it was time for dinner, and guess what, she had made his favorite
- Bratwurst and sauerkraut
15. I can almost guarantee you that if Mary keeps up this faith filled yielding to the Lord throughout the evening, Fred is going to be asking himself some pretty hard questions about why he treats his wife the way he does
 16. Now, I could have turned this whole story around and had Fred been the one who came to his senses and let Christ live through him
 17. The point is this - where and when will it begin?
 18. We can't wait for others
 19. I must begin where I am at right now
 20. I have to end my resolutions and vows because they are only manifestations of self effort
 21. If I make any resolution, let it be that I will stop striving and will by faith look to Christ,. Right now, right here, right to the end!

III. CONCLUSION

A. Scars

1. An orphaned boy was living with his grandmother when their house caught fire.
2. The grandmother, trying to get upstairs to rescue the boy, perished in the flames.
3. The boy's cries for help were finally answered by a man who climbed an iron drain pipe and came back down with the boy hanging tightly to his neck.
4. Several weeks later, a public hearing was held to determine who would receive custody of the child.
5. A farmer, a teacher, and the town's wealthiest citizen all gave the reasons they felt they should be chosen to give the boy a home.
6. But as they talked, the lad's eyes remained focused on the floor.
7. Then a stranger walked to the front of the hall and slowly took his hands from his pockets, revealing severe scars on them.
8. As the crowd gasped, the boy cried out in recognition - This was the man who had saved his life.
9. His hands had been burned when he climbed the hot pipe.
10. With a leap, the boy threw his arms around the man's neck and held on for dear life.
11. The other 3 silently walked away, leaving the boy and his rescuer alone.
12. Those marred hands had settled the issue.
13. And so it is with Jesus.
14. His nail-pierced hands remind us that He has rescued us from sin and its deadly consequences
15. They also remind us that Christ has saved us for more than just filling heaven with people
16. The scars remind us that He did it all because of His great love for us
17. And in that love, He wants to be close to us today, not just the sweet by and by

18. Cease from your self-effort, and surrender to God
19. Let Him live in and through you!