

Galatians 2 (Part 3): 19-21 • Crucified with Christ

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Those of you that were here last time remember me saying that these last 3 verses of Galatians chapter 2, I believe, are some of the most powerful verses in the entire Bible. Which, of course, sets the stage for me to fail miserably at communicating them to you somehow, but and I'm quite sure that, I can't begin to do them justice, but here we go.

Galatians chapter 2 beginning at verse 19. It goes like this,

¹⁹“For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.” (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, as we delve into these last few verses, we recognize that there is so much here that we really can't begin to mine the depths of what you are saying here through the apostle Paul, but Lord we're going to give it a shot.

And so, we pray that you would help us, Lord, as we unpack these verses a little bit that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart also Lord to receive from you as you speak to us and as you bring understanding and insight into what these things are all about.

Be with us, we ask Father God in Jesus precious name, amen.

Paul really comes out in these last 3 verses of this chapter with a very powerful statement, and that statement is the very first thing that he says there, “*I died to the law*” and that's a really amazing thing when you remember his audience.

His audience is the people of the churches of Galatia who have been now lured back under law keeping. They're being convinced by these legalists who showed

up there that they need to embrace the law of Moses to be saved, and some of the people are getting sucked into it.

And so, Paul comes out with this incredible statement to these believers and incredible to you and I in its implications, he says, *“I died to the law,”* which is a wonderful thing to hear. But the rest of us are sitting around going, what does that mean? What exactly does it mean when Paul says, I died to the law? He's basically saying here there's no way the law can save me because I am dead to it, right?

First of all, this is a very difficult statement to understand, and I want to say that at the outset because I don't want you to get discouraged. If you read through some of the elements of what Paul says here in the Book of Galatians and you end up just scratching your head, don't feel like you're an idiot, because these are things that take some real serious contemplation.

And frankly, we need the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to a place of understanding, but basically Paul is saying this, without explaining how, he's saying that when I came to know Christ as my Savior, when I received Him as the Savior of my life, His death became my death.

That's what he's saying and, he actually talks about this, not surprisingly, in some of his other letters, that he wrote throughout the New Testament. One of which is in Romans chapter 6. Let me put this on the screen for you. Paul wrote to the Romans,

Romans 6:3-4 (NIV)

“...don't you know, that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, We're actually baptized, into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.”

“...don't you know, that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, We're actually baptized, (he says) into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.”

Now, this is again, a very deep and complex statement, but I want you to, first of all, understand that just because Paul is using the word baptized or baptism doesn't mean he's necessarily talking about water baptism. Okay? Water baptism is the picture of a greater reality and the greater reality is that baptism means to be immersed.

By the way, that's why we dunk people when we baptize them. I don't know, that's why we don't sprinkle people. People have asked me before, why don't you sprinkle baptize people? Well, do you understand that the word baptize in the Greek means to immerse, it literally means dunked, okay? They would use it for other purposes as well in the Greek language, but it always had the same meaning, to immerse, alright?

Now think about that as it relates to what Paul is saying here about Jesus. Let's read it again and let me put in that idea. *“Don't you know that all of us who were “immersed” into Christ Jesus,”* which is what baptism is a picture of, being immersed into Him. Okay, not into water. Guys, water doesn't save you. Jesus saves you. You've got to be immersed into Jesus. Right? You can be immersed in water all you want. It might get you clean, but it won't get you saved.

He says, *“don't you know that all of us who were immersed into Christ Jesus were immersed into His death.”* We were literally joined with Him, Paul says there, into His death. In fact, he says, we were even buried with Him, he goes on to say, *“through this immersion into death,”* all right? So, when we come to know Christ as our Savior, when we receive Him as Savior of our lives, there exists a union. We enter into a union with Jesus, whereby we share in common what Jesus went through, and I think that the opposite is true.

He shares what we go through as well, but that's another message. But I want you to know this, that this means that the death of Jesus is, in a very real sense of the term, our death, and all of the implications that go along with that, and believe me, there are benefits to sharing Christ's death and that might sound weird to you, and I totally get it, because we're not used to thinking about the benefit of death unless you're an insurance agent and you're hawking death benefits.

But we don't usually think that death is a benefit. We're like, a benefit? Yeah, it's just a big fat bummer, is what it is. Dying has never been on anybody's high list of things to do, but I want you to know that there are some ways in which death actually is a benefit. Christ's death is a benefit to you. Let me give some quick examples. When you die, certain things are over, and if they happen to be negative, that means you've been set free from those things.

Imagine, for example, you were born into slavery, and ever since the time you were able to work, you worked hard and long, painful, toilsome hours, and your life was a life of servitude to the whims of your master. And then you come to

the end of your life, and you die and guess what? You are now free from slavery. You're not really free to enjoy that freedom, or able to, but you're free.

You're not a slave anymore. Why? Because you're dead. Let me give you another example. This might sound a little morbid. We all know that marriage was intended by God to be a blessing for those who enter into it. Unfortunately, it's not for everybody. Imagine you're in a loveless marriage. Well, according to the Scripture if you or your spouse dies, you are now free, right? To remarry another.

You're no longer married to that person and you're free to remarry. You might be thinking, well, gee, Pastor Paul, that's a bad example. Hey, I didn't think of it. The Apostle Paul did. He actually uses marriage as an example of how we've been set free from the law. Want me to prove it to you? Romans chapter 7. Check this out. Sorry for how long it is. He says,

Romans 7:1-4 (NIV)

Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over a man as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is then released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—(and pay attention to this sentence right here) that the law has authority over a man as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is then released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, (that's a no-no we call her an adulteress) she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress even though she marries another man. (Look at what he says) So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.”

Great passage. Let me leave it up here for just a moment so we can focus on that first statement. “*Do you not know, brothers, for I'm speaking to men who know the law.*” He says that “*the law has authority over you only as long as you're alive.*” Only as long as you're living. Guess what? When you die, the law

doesn't have a thing to say to you, right? You can no longer be picked up for speeding when you're dead. Right?

There's all kinds of laws that just no longer apply because you're dead, right? The law doesn't have authority over a dead person. Here's the point of what Paul's saying. When you come to Christ, when you join with Christ, when you join and understand that you have a connection to Christ in the benefits of His death, that same authority of the law is now void over your life as well.

And that's why Paul got so upset when he found out that the Galatian churches were being drawn back under the law. He's writing these people to say, guys when you came to Jesus, you were released from the authority of the law! Don't you understand that? Why are you now trying to go back under it? Why are you now trying to put yourself back under that authority?

You've been set free from it right? It is no longer dominating your life. It has been rendered void. How many other ways can I say it? And so, this is why Paul is writing this whole letter, and we get pictures of this joining that we do with Jesus, in so many ways, but not the least of which we got to witness just last week.

For those of you that were here, we had a water baptism right over here in the corner, set up our little fish tank, and we baptized a few people who made the decision to, make their faith in Christ, a public declaration, and we got to witness that, and I talked a little bit last week about how baptism, water baptism, is a picture, a beautiful, it's like a dramatization, a pantomime, if you will, of what happens to us when we come to know Christ as our Savior, and we present to the people who are witnessing that we have joined with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

It's very cool. It's a very neat way of identifying with Jesus and that's what water baptism is. Let me depict it for you on the screen for those of you that might have missed water baptism last week. We call these the 3 stages or pictures of water baptism. The first of which is death and that is when the person is basically falling back into the water.

The Three Stages of Water Baptism



DEATH

Of course, in the arms of the individual who's doing the baptizing, but there's this picture of this individual who is entering into **Death**, right? But they're entering into Christ's death. In other words, they're being immersed into His death.

The Three Stages of Water Baptism



BURIAL

But then the next stage is that there is **Burial**, and that's when in that fraction of a moment when the person is, submerged or immersed under the water. That picture of burial, and thankfully, we never leave him there, but we bring him right back up out of the water, and that's, of course, a picture of resurrection.

The Three Stages of Water Baptism



RESURRECTION

And that's what water baptism depicts. It's that I have been immersed into Christ, into His death, into His burial, into His **Resurrection** and now, I'm not just wet, but I am identified with Him in the sense that I now can take hold of the benefits of His death, burial, and resurrection, you see? What it means is what He did and all the benefits that go with it, they're now mine. I have, I'm laying hold of them, right? I am possessing them for myself.

See, receiving Christ is way more than just getting forgiveness. Thank God it's forgiveness I mean, we're glad about that, but it's way more. I am now possessing all that Jesus is there to give me. I'm there to identify with Him, but I'm also to take hold of Him, right, by immersing myself in Him. And that's that picture of water baptism.

That's why we immerse people in water. It's a picture of being immersed into Jesus. Just being enveloped into Jesus, right? I want everything He has to offer, and I hope you do, too. And that's why Paul goes on. Look with me in your Bible. In verse 20, he says, *"I have been crucified with Christ."*

Now he's giving some specifics to how he entered into that death. I literally joined Him in His crucifixion.

Thank God you and I never, and will never, experience what it means to be physically crucified. I mean, hands down the worst form of public execution known to man. It was so horrific and deplorable. The Romans came up with it, but it was so horrific, if you were a Roman citizen, it was against the law for you to be crucified.

Only a non-Roman citizen could be crucified, right, because it was so horrible. It was terrible. People could linger on the cross for days while they slowly died. Why would you want to be joined with someone in that, and yet Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ. I have joined Him. Why does Paul want to be crucified with Christ?

Because of the benefits that come from it. That's the point. What are the benefits? He goes on here in this very verse and he says, "*It is no longer I who live*" and he's talking about the old Paul, the old man. "*But Christ,*" who he says, "*now lives in me.*"

See, Paul believed that the death he experienced with Christ was literal and he believed that the result was just as literal. Just as real, just as tangible. Not only did I die but I was raised to life.

The old man died. The new man, who is Christ in me, is now alive, and I am more alive than I ever have been. And that's part of the benefit. And you can see by this, as Paul goes on to say, "*The life I now live in the body*" or in the flesh, "*I live by faith.*" I don't live this life by law, by keeping rules, by keeping regulations, right? I live it by faith, and you can see at this juncture in Paul's argument that we've turned a corner, and that corner is from the focus of death and the benefit of death to this new element of faith.

Now we're going to begin to focus on faith and the fact that we live by faith. Listen, whenever you come to the topic of faith from the apostle Paul, this is not a sub-topic. This is not something that Paul mentions casually from time to time. It is the essence of his Gospel. It is the mechanism through which you and I are born again, saved, forgiven of our sins, washed in the blood, and on our way to heaven.

Without faith you can't go past go, right? There must be faith. Look what Paul says in Ephesians the first part of chapter 2 verse part of verse 8,

Ephesians 2:8a ESV

*For by grace you've been saved **THROUGH FAITH.***

*For by grace you've been saved (through what?) **THROUGH FAITH.***

Again, "*through*" means it is the mechanism by which this takes place, the mechanism by which this is activated. Jesus died, but you must engage faith for what Jesus did on the cross to be activated or made real for you in your life, okay? Faith is incredibly important. And so, Paul now shifts the focus for you

and I, to what we now live by. He says, the life I live in this body, I live by faith.

I don't live it by my own wits, my own intelligence. I don't lean on my own understanding, right? I don't live it by the wisdom of the world. I don't live it by the demands of the law. I live it by faith. The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me, and when Paul talks about faith, he's talking about a total reliance. He's talking about a total dependence on Jesus, okay?

Please understand, don't minimize or simplify the definition of faith. Faith is not wishful thinking. Faith is not, I have faith that when I push the button on my toaster and put the bread down, it's going to come up as toast. Faith is a total reliance. A total dependence, and that's why he's writing to the Galatians, because you see, that total dependence was beginning to erode and they were being convinced, no, you have to also be circumcised, and you have to also keep some of the law of Moses and as Christians, we've come under some of that same stuff.

No, you've got to keep a certain day. See, it's not just Jesus. You've got to go to church on a certain day. Or you got to do this just right, or you got to do that just this way, and this is the way you are saved, and Paul comes back here and he says, NO! We are saved by grace through faith as a total reliance on the person and the work of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished for us on the cross and nothing else!

I put my faith in nothing beyond what Christ did for me on the cross right? I'm not relying on the fact that I'm going to be a good person from here on out. I'm not relying on that. I have an expectation Jesus is going to work in my life, but that's not going to save me. I'm only saved by Him, what He did on the cross, and you know what?

It is the same faith that we remember when we take communion as a body of Christ, and that's one of the reasons I love taking communion with you guys, because it's an opportunity for us to go back and just say, alright, now how are we saved again? We're saved through the body and the blood of Jesus, and we remember, not just that it happened, we remember that our total reliance is on this thing, what Jesus did, you see?

That's what we're remembering. We're remembering what He did, and we're also re-establishing in our own heart and mind, this is it! This is it! There's nothing else! There's no other way! There's no other means! There's no other

words! There's no other nothing! Sorry to use a double negative but there's, that's it, right? Jesus is it!

That's why Paul says to the Corinthians, if Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead, we're lost because that's all we've been relying on. Of what He did for us. And the sign of the approval of what He did for us, which was the resurrection of the dead, of Christ from the tomb. So, let's take communion, shall we? I'm going to ask the men who are serving to ready themselves to do that.

Ken's going to come up and help us to worship. I'm going to bring the lights down so that we can eliminate some distractions around us, and really focus on remembering what we've put our faith in, because it's a person. You guys know that? It's a person. That's what our faith is in. Our faith is not in religion. Man is our faith not in religion! Religion can't save you. Jesus will save you. He's a person. Right?

Our faith is in a person. Oh, we get so no, my faith is in a day. If I go to church on the right day, if I do this, if I do that, if my faith is in water baptism. No, no no, no! My faith is in a person! It's not what you do. It's what He did. And what He did was He bore your sins on the cross and He paid for your life with His blood, and He purchased you from death unto life.