

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Not I's: Not I, but Christ

Welcome to *Truth for Today* - the Bible Explained. We are currently looking at the "Not I's" in the Bible. The title of this talk is "Not I but Christ" and the text for this talk is taken from Galatians 2:20: *"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 faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

In the goodness of God, He has provided a complete and righteous remedy for your sins. In Christ, God has done for you what you could never do for yourself. Are you, like so many others, trying to do the best you can to obtain God's salvation? Dear friend, you cannot be justified by observing the law; you can only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. The law condemns you to death, but Christ took your place and became your Substitute in His death on the cross. Crucifixion was a public, judicial act. It meant that the person's life was terminated in an act of judgment. The life was ended. When Christ died, He not only died for your sins but He met all the righteous demands of the broken Law. The cross means the end of you as a sinner in God's sight. It means the end of you as a person seeking to merit or earn salvation by your own efforts. It is the end of your old self, the sinful evil "I" has gone. It has no more claims on your daily life. This is true as to your standing before God; it should also be true as to your behaviour. I read an illustration recently which may help you understand this point.

Soon after Augustine's conversion, he was walking down the street in Milan, Italy. There he met a prostitute whom he had known most intimately. She called on him but he would not answer her, he just kept on walking. "Augustine," she called again. "It is I!" Without missing a beat and with the assurance of Christ in his heart, he replied, "Yes, but it is no longer I." Augustine took to his heels and ran away from the situation as quickly as he could. Because of Christ and His Spirit, Augustine was a changed man. He was born again, a brand-new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

When you come to Christ you do not cease to live as a personality or as an individual. But God sees you in a different way. God sees you as one who has died and sees Christ in you. *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* The Saviour did not die for me in order that I might go on living my life as I choose. He died for me so that from now on He might be able to live His life in me.

"The life that I now live in this [human] body, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). Faith means reliance or dependence. The Christian lives by continual dependence on Christ, by yielding to Him, by allowing Christ to live His life in him or her. Thus, the believer's rule of life is Christ and not the law. It is not a matter of striving, but trusting. He or she lives a holy life, not out of fear or punishment, but out of love *"to the Son of God, who loved [him or her] and gave Himself for [him or her]"* (Galatians 2:20).

In yourself as a believer, you are no more capable of living a life that is well-pleasing to God as you were of earning initial salvation. But you now belong to a new creation all together. You are not trying to work for your salvation; you are saved through the work of Christ accomplished in His death on the cross. You can look back with confidence to that cross where Jesus hung, the bleeding Victim, in your place, and you can say in faith, *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"* (Galatians 2:20).

"I" am as completely dependent upon God for power to live my new life in Christ as "I" was for redemption. As you are identified with Him in His death on the cross, you are now linked with Him in resurrection life, for He has given you to be a partaker of His own glorious eternal life.

"The life which I now live in the flesh" is your experience in this world as a Christian person. "I live" - not by putting yourself under rules and regulations and trying to keep the law of the Ten Commandments but - *"by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."* Life is no longer self-centred but Christ centred. If you are occupied with Christ, and your life is lived in dependence upon Christ as the Son of God and His power, your life will be lived out unreservedly for Him.

Dear friend, can you say these wonderful words truthfully in your heart: *"The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"*? Only those who trust in Him can speak like that. Righteousness cannot be found in legality or self-effort. Christ gave Himself for needy sinners, and He is Himself the righteousness of all who put their trust in Him.

Paul, formerly known as Saul (see Acts 13:9), was the one who wrote these words in Galatians 2:20. He was a great example of someone who truly knew what it was to have Christ living in him. In Acts 9:1-19, we read of Saul's conversion, of the miraculous change that took place in his life as he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. Saul was heading from Jerusalem to Damascus with letters of authority from the high priest to go into the synagogues of Damascus to arrest Christians and bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). Saul, if he had been left to his own accord would have blazed his way into Damascus, but the Lord stopped him in his tracks (Acts 9:3).

During Saul's encounter with the Lord, he was blinded by the bright light that shone from heaven (Acts 9:1-2), so he needed help and he was led by the hand humbly into Damascus (Acts 9:8). What a come down! What humility! Saul's name was later changed to Paul, which meant "small" or "humble" in Latin (see Acts 13:9). Paul was a chosen vessel of the Lord; he was to bear the name of Jesus to the Gentiles (all other nations but the Jews), also to kings and to the Jews themselves (Acts 9:15). The Lord graciously showed Paul how much he was going to suffer for His sake (Acts 9:16). Paul was now under new management; his sins had been forgiven and he now had new life in Christ and Christ was now living in him. Paul was a changed man!

Later we read that after three days Paul regained his sight and he was baptised (Acts 9:18). Paul then immediately started to preach in the synagogues a simple straightforward message that *"Christ is the Son of God"* (Acts 9:20). At first his preaching aroused curious interest (Acts 9:21-22), but after a while the Jews plotted to kill him (Acts 9:23-24). They set a watch on the gates day and night, desiring to arrest him. One night the disciples took Paul, placed him in a basket, and lowered him through a window in the wall of the city to the ground outside (Acts 9:25). He was then able to escape. Why does Paul mention this incident? (See 2 Corinthians 11:33). It has been suggested that Paul was prepared to sacrifice his own personal pride and to appear as a coward in the eyes of men for the paramount interest in his life, which was to serve his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This occasion must have been one of the most humiliating experiences in his life.

In Isaiah 64:6 we read: *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."* The young man in Luke 18:18-23 had an outstanding character; he wanted to inherit eternal life (Luke 18:18), but he lacked one thing (Luke 18:22). To have a life that Christ may live in you, you need to be *"born again"* (John 3:3 and John 3:7).

Paul knew it! Romans 7:18: *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."* 1 Corinthians 2:14: *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

If you are not a true believer in Jesus Christ, Christ cannot live in you at all. Paul not only wanted to live for Christ, he was prepared to die for Christ. Philippians 1:21: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* But Paul wanted Christ to live in him, Philippians 1:20: *"so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death."*

For Christ to live in the believer, I believe that there must be suitable conditions. There must be holiness and separation from evil - in other words a clean life. Before the light can burn clearly and brightly out of a lamp, the glass must be kept clean. John the Baptist is an example of this because the Lord spoke of him in John 5:35: *"he was a bright and shining light."*

Peter and John also had a great testimony as others took note that *"they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). Peter and John were people no different from you and me, but their lives reflected Christ. What do we expect to see in a believer in whom Christ is living? We expect to see the things that were seen in Christ when He was here on earth! Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:11: *"but thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."* We can also add grace, mercy, compassion, kindness, goodness and many more, all seen perfectly in the Lord. The Lord walked through this world in perfection. Does your life reflect Christ? You might say, well, I have no chance because Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God. I know! But in all our failures, allowing and recognising that Christ can truly live in us will bear witness of Him.

I heard a story of a man who was going on holiday with his family, and they were in the airport rushing to get to the gate, which was closing very soon. As he got to the gate, he was aware of a little girl who had dropped the basket she was carrying and all her things in it had scattered all over the floor. The man told his wife and children to go on into the aeroplane and, if he was too late, he would get the next flight. The man got to his knees and picked up all the little girl's things and put them back into her basket. It was only when the man went over to give the little girl her basket that he discovered that she was blind. The little girl thanked the man and asked if he was Jesus! The little girl had been praying to Jesus that she would get all the things that she had dropped. I am sure you can relate to this story. How many of us would have stopped if there was a possibility that we would have missed our flight? Jesus stopped on many occasions to care for individuals who needed his help!

1 Timothy 6:11 lists the things that we are encouraged to follow. I like to look for examples in the Bible. Noah was a man marked by *"righteousness"*. Noah was a just man who was upright and sincere in a world that was debased and corrupt, and swiftly heading for judgment. God invited Noah and his family into the ark because He recognised his righteousness. In the gospel of Luke, which speaks of the Lord as the Son of Man, the Centurion at the cross said of the Lord Jesus, *"Certainly this was a righteous man"* (Luke 23:47). Pilate could find no fault in Jesus (Luke 23:4, Luke 23:14, John 18:38, John 19:4, John 19:6) because he was without sin (see 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22 and 1 John 3:5).

Stephen was a man who was marked by faith. He was a man who was *"full of faith and of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 7:55). Stephen was so like Christ! His last prayer as he lay dying from the cruelty of men was, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"* (Acts 7:60). Remember the words of Jesus on the cross, *"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34). Paul was marked by his love for others. In 2 Corinthians 12, which is a remarkable chapter, Paul said: *"the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved"* (2 Corinthians 12:15).

The Lord Himself came in love; He was rejected by His own (see Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:4, 1 Peter 2:7 and John 1:11) and He gave Himself as an offering for sin (see Hebrews 10:6-18). When we think of patience, my thoughts go to Job. There was no one who suffered as many things as Job suffered. James 5:11 speaks about Job's patience: *"ye have heard of the patience of Job."* As believers, we are so thankful for the patience that the Lord has with us. Our love ebbs and flows; we let the Lord down at times; we miss opportunities to speak out for Him; but His love for us never changes!

Moses was a man marked by meekness. According to the Bible he was the meekest man who ever lived. Numbers 12:3 reads, *"now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."* Meekness is not weakness. Sometimes we confuse the two. Someone who is meek has a mild temperament and is not quick to become angry, irritated or impatient. Often when you think of someone who is meek, you might tend to believe he or she has no backbone.

The Lord was meek, but He stood up to the money changers in the temple (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15, John 2:14-15) for example. The Lord said in Matthew 11:28-29: *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*

Paul too spoke of the meekness and gentleness of Christ in 2 Corinthians 10:1. In Ephesians 4:1-2 we are encouraged *"to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love."*

Someone once wrote:

*"Is your life a shining witness,
With a testimony true,
Could the world be won for Jesus,
By just what it sees in you?"*

Georgia B. Adams.

Galatians 5:22-23 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit: *"...love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance."* If we live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit and with the Spirit's help we can live these things out in our lives and people will see "Christ living in me."

Paul asked the Lord: *"What will You have me to do?"* (Acts 9:6). I don't think he had any idea where that question was going to take him in his life. Paul surrendered himself to the will of the Lord. During the three days when Paul was blind (see Acts 9:9), I believe the Lord told him what he would suffer for His sake. Paul spent a further three years in Arabia, where again I feel the Lord prepared him for what He wanted him to. Paul had a deep faith in his Lord. Paul suffered many things on his travels, preaching and teaching. 2 Corinthians 11:22-23 gives a list of some of the things he suffered. Although Paul suffered many things he was also very privileged in that he was taken up to the third heaven where he met the Lord (see 2 Corinthians 12:2). This was an experience that Paul was not allowed to talk about but I believe this experience never left him. After this the Lord allowed Paul to suffer some thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). What was Paul's thorn in the flesh? All we can say for sure is that it was some bodily trial which God allowed to come into his life. Paul describes the thorn in the flesh as *"a messenger of Satan to buffet [him]"* (2 Corinthians 12:7). In one sense it represented an effort on Satan's part to hinder Paul in his work. But God is greater than Satan (see 1 John 4:4), and He used the thorn to further the work of the Lord by keeping Paul humble (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Successful service for Christ depends on a weak servant. The weaker he is, the more the power of Christ accompanies his preaching (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Paul prayed three times to the Lord for the removal of the thorn in the flesh. But the Lord said to him personally, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* Paul accepted this and continued to say. *"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Philippians 4:13 is testimony of Paul's confidence in the Lord: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

I would like to leave Proverbs 3:5-6 with you as an encouragement: *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*

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