

GALATIANS

Lesson 20

The Spirit and Crucifixion of the Sin Nature Galatians 5:24-25

INTRODUCTION

In modern day Christianity, we hear so much of the positive side of the Christian life we forget there is a negative side. This is the “Pepsi Generation” and most Americans are brainwashed with slogans which present the happy, easy-going, exciting side of life. This attitude has carried over into the thinking of many Christians, and it is quite commonplace to hear sermons about the Christ-life, the filling of the Spirit, the exciting faith-rest life, the dynamics of Christianity, the positive life of faith. There is a Biblical basis for the positive side of Christianity, but it represents only one-half of the picture. It is very seldom that one hears a message on the struggle of faith, the conflict within the Christian, the necessity of self-discipline or the crucifixion of one’s passions and desires.

The positive aspect of the Christian life is so much more attractive and appealing to men and makes so very few demands on the believer. Nevertheless, positive Christianity must be balanced with man’s responsibility to work at his salvation and come to grips with the necessity for holiness in his or her life (Phil. 2:12-13 **“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”**).

This morning we are going to learn that by faith the Christian walks in dependence on the Holy Spirit, and in obedience he puts to death the evil desires of the sin nature (flesh, sin principle). Both aspects are true and when either aspect is neglected we find spiritually dwarfed Christians.

CRUCIFIXION OF THE SIN NATURE 5:24

“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

What in the world does it mean to crucify the sin nature?

Crucifixion Involves the Sin Nature. There still remains within every Christian a sin nature (flesh, Adamic nature, sin principle). It is that sin principle in the Christian that puts off sinful impulses. The sin nature does not always manifest itself in gross immoral sin, but always manifests itself in a self-centered attitude that wants to please self. The sin nature in the Christian is very real and very active but it is to be crucified or put to death.

Crucifixion is to be Done by the Christian. The crucifixion spoken of here in Galatians is not something done **to** the Christian, but something done **by** the Christian. This is a deed in which the believer is actively involved, for he puts to death the desires, passions, lusts, and affections of the flesh. This involves a positive renunciation of the sin nature by the true child of God.

Crucifixion Took Place at Conversion. This verse indicates that the act of putting the flesh to death took place at a past point in time, for Christians have crucified the flesh. Apparently this act is very closely related to repentance. By faith a man trusts in Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, and by repentance he changes his mind about sin, Christ and God and chooses to walk a new kind of life in Christ. In repentance a person acknowledges Christ’s right to rule in his life and turns away from his old life of sin, declaring his desire to have a new life-style in Christ. Therefore, at conversion a man is saying he takes his flesh, his willful and wayward self, and nails it to the Cross. This is a once-and-for-all act but it deals with one’s attitude or commitment. The believer has an attitude that desires to put the sin nature to death and he

goes after a new life in Christ. The flesh is still very much alive in the Christian but there is a definite desire and attitude to crucify it by not obeying it. Repentance began at a point in time when one received Christ, but the Christian lives a whole life of repentance. Therefore, just as the believer had an attitude of faith to put his flesh to death at conversion, he is to have a constant attitude of desiring to put the sin nature to death in his daily experience.

One of the great conversions of all time was that of Augustine in the fifth century. Augustine was raised by a Christian mother, but at an early age he rejected Christianity as totally untenable. He went to college in Carthage and began to run with a filthy crowd of companions. He became debauched and perverted in his sex life and filled his life with every conceivable type of sin. At seventeen, he fathered an illegitimate son. He hated school but loved philosophy and searched for the answers to life. By the time he was in his mid-twenties, he realized that education, philosophy, wild living and even pagan religion brought him no peace in his life. Then Augustine had a close friend die and he realized he not only had no answer for life but also none for death. He came under conviction by the Holy Spirit, but for years he struggled with becoming a Christian and even went deeper into sin. For years he prayed, "O God, grant me chastity and continence, but not yet!"

Then one day in his early twenties, Augustine was saved by God. He read Romans 13:13-14, "Let us behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Right then he believed in Christ and crucified his flesh. Great assurance flooded his soul. He was not totally free from his sin nature, but his conversion was the beginning of the process of defeating the sin nature in his experience.

A few years after Augustine's conversion, he was walking in a certain area of the city where he had done much of his sinful living as an unsaved man. He saw a woman with whom he had sex and their eyes met. Augustine quickly turned, lifted up his long toga, and ran! The woman ran after him, crying "Austin, Austin, stop; it is only me!" Augustine replied, "I must not stop, for it is not me. I am a new creature in Christ and crucified with Christ. I will obey Christ and not my sinful desires!"

Crucifixion of the Flesh is Made Possible through Union with Christ. The reason the Christian can and does put to death the deeds of the sin nature is that he has been co-crucified with Christ. At the moment of conversion, the Christian was placed into mystical union with Jesus Christ so that he shares Christ's death to sin as well as His resurrection unto eternal life (Rom. 6:3-4, 6-7 **"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. . . For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."**). The Christian's new union with Christ has broken the power of the sin nature over the believer so that the Christian no longer has to serve sin as a slave and can walk a new kind of life.

Before conversion a person is a slave to his sin nature and has no power over it. After conversion, through union with Christ, the power and authority of the sin nature has been broken. Now the Christian does not have to obey the dictates of his flesh although he may do so. The Christian has the ability to say "NO" to the sin nature. Before salvation he always obeyed the sin nature, but now the Christian is being set free and by his will he can say "no" to every impulse, passion, desire and craving of his sin nature. The Christian does not always say "yes" to the Holy Spirit and "no" to the sin nature, but he can now choose for God and against sin, and he will have new desires for God (Gal. 2:20 **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."**).

This is a great mystery in that the Christian has been crucified positionally and he crucifies himself experientially. There are many such mysteries in the Bible, and while they are both true they cannot be reconciled to the human mind. For instance:

God is renewing the Christian and the Christian is to renew his own mind.
The believer has put on Christ at conversion and yet he is to put on Christ in his experience.

Spiritual works are a total product of God and yet they are to be produced by men.
The Christian has eternal life and yet he is to lay hold of eternal life.

It is not difficult to see how the Christian has been crucified in the flesh and yet he is to crucify the sin nature in his experience (Col. 3:5 **“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”**).

Crucifixion is a Daily Experience. Every Christian is to deny the sin nature and do the will of God. This is surely what Christ meant when He said, **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”** (Mark 8:34).

In the Roman world, those who picked up a cross were condemned criminals on their way to be crucified at the stake. The Christian is to treat the sin nature like a condemned criminal and show it no mercy, for positionally it has lost its hold over the believer and does not have to be obeyed. In Luke 9:23 our Lord said that we are to take up our cross daily and follow him, so the battle with the flesh goes on as long as we are in these sinful bodies.

At conversion, we nailed our old life to the cross by faith and we must be careful not to take it down by a lack of faith. If we begin to fondle the sin nature, to caress it, to feed it, we are fanning the flames for greater yielding to evil cravings and desires. When some evil thought enters the mind, we must not tolerate it for a moment and kick it out at once. If temptations come, we must realize that this comes from our enemy the flesh, and we must defeat it before it defeats us. When temptations come, we must say to ourselves, “I have been co-crucified with Christ; I have crucified the sin nature at the Cross; I have declared war on the flesh; I do not have to obey it and by the grace of a sovereign God I will not obey it!” So what happens if you yield to the sin nature? Confess your sin immediately and by faith put your sin nature back up on the Cross, where it has been crucified. Confess your sin and get up and keep moving for God.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT 5:25

“Since we live by (in) the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

The Christian’s Sphere of Spiritual Existence. The Christian has the position of being “in the Holy Spirit.” From God’s perspective, the believer has a new sphere of existence, and that sphere is the Holy Spirit Himself. Christians, by virtue of the new birth and union with Christ, are living in the Holy Spirit. God created every Christian for life in the Spirit.

God creates all of His creatures to live in their respective environments. Fish were created to live in the sea. Take them out of the sea and they die. Animals were created to live in the sphere of air on land but if they do not breathe they will die. The Christian man is God’s spiritual creation, made to live in the sphere of the Holy Spirit. When the Christian does not walk in the Spirit, he is living in the realm of the sin nature, for which he was not created. Therefore, he is a miserable person.

The Christian’s Responsibility to Walk in the Spirit. This literally says, “Let us keep on keeping in step with the Spirit.” Since every Christian lives in the Spirit, every Christian should walk by the rule or walk in line or walk in step with the Spirit. We keep in step with the Spirit by yielding to His sovereign will for our lives and we do so one step at a time. It is the privilege and responsibility of every Christian to walk by the Spirit. The Christian who is not in submission to the leading and commands of the Spirit is operating on the sin nature and is a miserable person, for he was created to live in the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Walking in dependence upon the Holy Spirit and crucifying the sin nature are ways to victory for those who have received Christ as Lord and Savior. Those outside of Christ can know nothing of victory in

Christ. How can a person become a Christian? There must first be the supernatural convicting and drawing of God, and then that person must place his faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

The scriptures tell us how Paul and Silas were asked by the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" They answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." The Christian life begins in one's experience when he trusts in Jesus Christ. Have you begun the Christian life yet? Have you trusted Christ as your Savior? If you have not, I suggest you make this decision immediately, for Christ is the only way to heaven.