



A Passion for Holiness – Part 6
Galatians 2:20
GCSP – 04/11/2009

In August of 1945, the United States of America dropped an atomic bomb named "Little Boy" on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, and another atomic bomb named "Fat Man" on the Japanese City of Nagasaki. For all intents and purposes the dropping of these two bombs ended Japan's involvement in World War II. On September 2, 1945, Japan officially surrendered to the United States, a few months shy of four years from the raid on Pearl Harbor.

Even though the war was over in the Pacific after almost four years of battles and bloodshed, word did not reach many of the remote South Sea Islands and battles continued for quite a while. Some Japanese soldiers were in essence cut off from all communication and stranded on these islands for many years with no knowledge that the war was over. Still others, who knew of the surrender, refused to accept defeat and continued to fight to the death.

There comes a point in most wars when a decisive victory in an individual battle makes the final outcome clear to both sides. But even though the war has been won by one side, pretty much at that moment, other battles on other fronts continue to be fought. These battles are just as real as the ones prior to the decisive victory and soldiers are just as much wounded and killed even though the victory has been secured.

We do not know the exact date (by most educated calculations it was sometime in the spring of 36 or 37 A.D.) but the decisive victory over sin and death was secured by our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, some 4,000 years after the war began. 2,000 years later, battles are still being fought on different fronts but this does not negate the fact that the victory has already been secured. The serpent's head has in essence been cut off but the tail is still violently flailing around, wounding and destroying those who are in its path.

Beloved, Jesus is risen! He is victorious over the grave! He is victorious over sin! He is victorious over death! He is victorious over sickness and disease! He is victorious over your problems and circumstances! He is victorious over depression and sadness! He is victorious over anything that comes against you! The outcome of the war is not even in the slightest way in doubt. Satan is a defeated foe and it is high time we start treating him such.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Paul's epistle to the **Galatians**.

Galatians 2:20

Let's pray.

One of the "catch phrases" in Christianity that became popular over the last several decades is having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; a reference to salvation. It is actually a very accurate way of describing salvation; for it is indeed a very personal relationship. Those who have not experienced this relationship will obviously be

skeptical. How can you have a personal relationship with someone who died 2,000 years ago? Or even if they in some way believe that Jesus is God and is now in heaven, how can you have a personal relationship with a divine being in heaven; wherever that is?

The Apostle Paul makes it very clear just how personal this relationship is by his use of personal pronouns in the verse we just read. Let's look at it again. In the translation I use, the NASB, there are seven personal pronouns; the King James has eight; the NIV has seven; and the original Greek could be translated with anywhere between six or eight in the way it is worded.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me."

How much more personal does salvation need to be in your book?

We serve a personal God. We worship a personal Savior. At the point of confessing with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord of your life and believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, the Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell within you. As we began our study of the Book of Hebrews last Monday evening we saw in the very first verse of that marvelous Book that God spoke and God speaks. Do you realize how unique and magnificent that is to have a God that spoke and still speaks today? Do you know how many false religions out there serve dead people and carved idols who have no voices; who cannot communicate in any way, shape, or form?

We worship and serve a God who not only gives us the privilege to have a personal relationship with but a God who longs for and desires an intimate and personal relationship with us.

Far too many Christians have the notion in their heads that they are just a single face in a massive crowd when it comes to how God looks upon them. It's like standing outside on a clear night and looking at the Milky Way. From our vantage point it just looks like a cloudy haze, but when you point a powerful telescope to that haze you discover it is made up of thousands of individual stars. If you get an even more powerful telescope you can view the details of each of these individual stars. In a very small and meager way this is an illustration of what Jesus does for us in regards to God the Father. Jesus is that most powerful telescope and so much more in bringing us to the Father out of the multitudes to experience intimate fellowship and relationship.

You are not just a face in the crowd. You are not insignificant. You are not unimportant. You are not forgotten or neglected, even when your outward circumstances try to convince you otherwise. God loves you with a love you or I cannot begin to comprehend. God watches over every step you take. He controls every breath you take and every beat of your heart. There is not a single rogue molecule, or proton, or neutron, or atom operating in your body that God is not aware of and that He cannot direct with a single thought. And this God longs for and desires to have a close and intimate and personal relationship with you.

Try getting that from any of the false gods that millions of people worship every day.

When you think this through you have a personal faith, a personal trust, a personal peace, a personal commitment, a personal holiness, a personal prayer life, and so many other aspects of your Christian life that are personal between you and God. We can share together and sing together and fellowship together, but your personal relationship with God is yours and yours alone. Your experiences with God, in this relationship aspect of Christianity, are different from mine; not necessarily better or worse, just different. And because these experiences are personal between you and God, none of us should ever be trying to force our experiences upon others. Share them with us but don't look at your personal experiences with God as the norm and that I am lacking if my personal experiences with God are different.

Please do not read into what I am saying by thinking I am talking about salvation. There is only one way to salvation and that is clearly detailed for us in the Bible. And also do not make the mistake of thinking I am preaching that we do not have a common faith and a common Word of God in the Bible. I am just attempting to point out to you that God is a very intimate and personal God who loves each of us individually and communes with each of us individually and reveals things to each of us individually.

Because of this personal aspect of our walk with God, each of us will also have a very personal ministry and duty within the Body of Christ. My ministry is not your ministry. Your ministry is not someone else's ministry. And as we individually are reveling in and glorying in our personal relationship with Jesus, God will orchestrate all of these individual ministries and duties and responsibilities to mold and create a unified body of believers that are well equipped to face the challenges of the enemy and to move forward in the victory that Christ already won for the glory of His Kingdom!

In the midst of this personal relationship we have with the Lord we each have a personal responsibility.

Last night at Praise & Prayer, Beth reminded us of the way the pastor from Kenya said the word responsibility. Whether it was just his accent or he was purposeful in his diction, he said "Response-ability", meaning we possess the ability to respond.

And by the way, what a glorious fellowship we experienced with our brothers and sisters in Christ over at Faith Freedom Fellowship. The love and the friendship and the joy we shared together was encouraging and inspiring to me. I am sure there are some differences in how we interpret certain passages of Scripture but we are unified in our belief in and love for Jesus. Look forward to other opportunities to gather together with the Christians of South Park in the near future.

But back to the issue of our responsibility, or our ability to respond, in this personal relationship we have with the Lord; most Christians are deceived into thinking that attending church once a week and dropping a few bucks in the offering basket satisfies their responsibility. Many in essence take shelter in the fact that our church is active in doing ministry. Many celebrate the victories from the sidelines. It would be like my Cubbies finally winning the World Series and me taking the credit for it. I would have absolutely no part in that victory, if it ever happened, so it would be ridiculous for me to think otherwise.

But that is the mentality of many Christians who idly watch others in the church actively involved in ministry while they just show up for the service or the Bible study, once in a while or even every week, but aren't "in the game" so to speak. We need to constantly be examining ourselves and evaluating what our ministry is and/or what we are contributing to the cause of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom.

Beloved the work of the ministry is your responsibility. My responsibility is to equip you to do the work of the ministry according to **Ephesians 4:12**. I have a personal responsibility to be active in doing ministry as the Lord leads, but the bulk of the ministry to be done in the confines of the church is the primary responsibility of the individual members, not the pastor.

I don't know if this is just the attitude in American churches or if it is worldwide, but many think that since the pastor receives a salary he is in essence hired to do the work of the ministry. So as long as we give enough money to support him our responsibility is satisfied. According to **Galatians 6:6**, the salary a pastor receives is for teaching the principles of God's Word, not for anything else. **1 Timothy 5:17-18** affirms this same truth.

Well, I think that was a long enough introduction for tonight's sermon. And don't laugh; the pastor from Kenya says his sermons go on for about 4-6 hours each week. It takes 4-6 hours for some of his people to walk to church so he feels he should give them their money's worth; so I don't want to hear any complaints.

Let's read our text again – **"I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me."**

I am told that the aspen trees that grow throughout this valley are interconnected. If you could see the root structure underground you would not be able to tell where one tree ends and another begins. Our personal relationship with Jesus should also be so intertwined that people cannot tell where you end and Jesus begins.

The way the King James Version translates this verse seems to emphasize this point: **"I am crucified with Christ – nevertheless I live – yet not I – but Christ liveth in me."** I won't go so far as to say that Paul was confused but this wording goes a long way toward explaining how intertwined our lives should be with Christ's. As I referred to last week from **1 Corinthians 13:12**, our lives should be progressively reflecting Jesus Christ more and more each day, each week, each month, and each year; until we perfectly reflect Him when we get to heaven.

There was a Christian song that was popular 15-20 years ago called "You're the Only Jesus Some Will Ever See." I agree with the sentiment of that song, so if it is indeed true how much Jesus do people see when they see you? Do people sense the presence of Christ in your life when they first meet you? Are people trying to figure out what's different about you? Do they suddenly realize something is missing in their lives when they take the time to examine yours?

Having Jesus Christ living in you should be a radical change from where you were before Christ. Your old self and your old life should no longer exist. If you have truly been crucified with Christ everything should be different. You should no longer live by the world's standards. You should no longer be concerned with what concerns the world. The state of the economy, the state of your health, the state of your bank account, the state of your relationships, and the state of any and everything else should not have the same effect on you that it does the people of this world.

If you were a worrier before Christ you should not be a worrier now. If you wondered how you could survive financially before Christ you should not be wondering about that now. If you had health concerns before Christ that should not concern you now. Everything about your life should be in polar opposition to how the world responds to the same issues. We are no longer living in the flesh, or we shouldn't be anyway, but we should now be living by faith in the Son of God.

Being crucified with Christ and living by faith in Him is an utterly radical transformation.

Hold your place in the Book of **Galatians** and turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Colossians**. I want to just skim over several verses starting in chapter 2.

Colossians 2:1-3; 6-7; 9-10; 13-15; 23; 3:1-3; 5; 9-10; 12-17

Did you even get a glimpse of the glory and power of Jesus Christ that now lives within you? Did you see vividly enough that every time you act or talk or think like the world you are denying His glory and this power? Do you understand that having Christ living in you means your old way of thinking and living is nailed to the cross? Did you know that when you revert back to the ways of the world you are like the Children of Israel longing to return to the slavery of Egypt instead of living in the freedom they have been granted?

Do you see it? Do you really see how radically different your life should be?

Let's go back and read our text yet again - **"I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me."**

So let me ask a question: If Christ lives in you whose power should you be living by, yours or His? Then why don't you?

Isn't it completely foolish and ridiculous for us to continually rely on our own wisdom and our own ingenuity and our own resources in this life when we have infinite power and infinite wisdom and infinite resources living within us?

If we could just get this simple fact ingrained within us we would be radically different from the world and we would be a walking reflection of Jesus Christ to the world. But instead we repress the power and the wisdom and the resources and we choose to do what is humanly prudent and what is humanly sensible and what is humanly comfortable, and we miss out on 99% of the blessings and provision and promises God has in store for us – because God is the ultimate gentleman and He will never force His

way upon us. So we simply wallow around in the mud puddle in plain view of the mansion that is ours.

I was talking to Dick earlier this week and a thought came across my mind in regards to our church finances. God continues to provide and our bills are getting paid on time but things have tightened up quite a bit lately. The church bought a car which wiped out the surplus we had and now we are dependent upon the current week's offerings to pay for the bills we received the previous week – which is fine really. God does not call us to have a surplus of funds in the bank but to keep His money in circulation.

I could be way off base here but I do not believe in coincidences. Before things started getting tight in the church finances, I started clamping down on expenditures. It was primarily small things at first. I stopped purchasing new music for the church, I stopped purchasing new books for my studies, the leadership and I determined that I should not attend the pastor's conference this past year in lieu of trying to take a sabbatical instead when I can afford to hire someone to handle the insurance business while I'm gone, etc.

I understand the tighter finances at the church coincided with our faltering economy, but quite frankly folks the state of our economy doesn't concern God in the least. So it just got me wondering if our actions had anything to do with things getting tighter. Are we choosing to rely too much on our own human wisdom and understanding? Yes, we are called to be good stewards, but that has less to do with the amount that is spent and more to do with what it is spent on – which is why indebtedness is such an important issue for all of us to face head on considering how much money is spent on interest.

Again, I could be way off base, or the lesson God is teaching us in this sermon could possibly have some application in this too. It's worth thinking about and it is definitely worth you praying about as we make these kinds of decisions.

Christ lives in me. Christ lives in you if you are a genuine Christian according to the Bible's definition of a Christian. It's not just a scaled down version of Jesus living within us. We don't have Jesus light living within us – all the flavor but half the power.

Beloved, I believe that when we are living with any sort of lack in our lives it's not Jesus' fault. I believe when the church is operating from a position of lack it is not Jesus' fault. All of the fullness of God is available to us and is living within us. God's Word is abundantly clear that He wants us to live a life of abundance, if...if we live in obedience to His Word and if we live by faith in the Son of God (**Psalm 1:1-3**).

And living by faith means living by things we cannot see according to **Hebrews 11:1**.

Let's pray.