

Preacher's Pen points

"It Is No Longer I Who Live, but Christ Lives In Me"



How would you describe the ultimate priority of your life? For Paul, that priority is expressed in his vigorous defense to the Galatians: *"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me and the life that I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me"* (Gal. 2:20). This one window into the heart of Paul is foundational to all his life's efforts as a Christian.

Paul's Past

For decades Paul had sought to merit righteousness by works of obedience to the Law. Motivated by the strictest devotion to the traditions of the rabbis, he earned the reputation of one "blameless". However, after becoming a Christian, he realized how bankrupt his efforts had been to earn righteousness before God in this way. For the law that was intended to impart life to him through perfect obedience called instead for his death because of sin. Touched by the love of the Savior who died for him, Paul crucified the old man. He freely accepted the righteousness that comes on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. In baptism he began a new life lived *"by faith in the Son of God"*.

A New Principle of Life!

From this moment, it was Paul's life goal to be like the Lord. It was the appeal of all his letters: *"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts"* (Rom. 13:14). It was the grounds of his hope for himself as well as others: *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. 1:27). Consequently, many years later at Galatia, when some were advocating that conditions of righteousness by the Law be added to the message of the gospel, Paul firmly challenged them all. He reminded them that advocating any other grounds of righteousness rendered the cross of no effect. Only one

thing mattered: *"I am crucified with Christ;Christ lives in me"*.

Christ Living in Us!

When we clearly see Paul's earnest desire to be like Christ, we will have discovered not only what Paul was like, but what God has also called us all to be. For, if we are to enjoy Paul's hope, then we must also live his life. We too must come to see the selfless love of the Savior who gave himself up for us. We must crucify the old man that sin might be put away from us.

When we give our lives to the Lord, we will follow the teaching of the Holy Spirit who will transform us by the knowledge of Jesus into the His likeness and glory. We will grow up into him, attaining to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:14-16). In the most practical terms, the Lord will become the pattern for all our conduct. In every action and thought, we will ask ourselves, "Is this what my Savior would do? Would he go where I am going? Would he watch what I am watching? Would he say what I am about to say?" And, day by day, we will see God's power working in us, enabling us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). To profess to be a Christian and do otherwise is to miss the whole purpose of our calling.

Let Us Be Like Paul!

It was this purpose that molded the life of the apostle Paul and found expression in this mirror into his heart. May we then in the spirit of Paul's great affirmation also meaningfully sing and pray, "Oh to be like thee, oh to be like thee, blessed Redeemer, pure as thou art! Come in thy sweetness; come in thy fulness. Stamp thine own image deep on my heart".

--Johnny Felker