

# Sermons on Galatians - Robert Morgan

**Introduction** - Robert J Morgan is the teaching pastor at [Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee](#) and is well known for expository messages that are rich in excellent illustrations of Biblical principles. These sermons are older messages preached on various passages in Romans.

## THIS IS THE LIFE Galatians 2:20 Robert Morgan

If you could have one verse of Scripture engraved onto your tombstone, what would it be? Or if you could have one verse and only one scripted and framed to hang in your living room or kitchen, which verse would you choose? Or, to put it a little differently, if someone were to write a biography of your life and put one verse on the title page, what verse would best summarize your aspirations and experiences as a Christian?

I'd like to suggest that out of the 31,102 verses in the Bible, you'd have a hard time coming up with a better choice than the verse I'd like to use as a text today--Galatians 2:20. It says:

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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (KJV).

This is a verse I memorized during my college days; I've been mulling over it for twenty-five years, but I have yet to plumb its depths. In simplest fashion, it seems to present three configurations to the Christian life.

### The Relinquished Life

First, Galatians 2:20 tells us the Christian life is a relinquished life: I am crucified with Christ. What exactly does that mean? It means that we have come to the old rugged cross and have gazed upon the dying form of one who suffered there for us. We see his hands nailed fast to the wood. We see the spike in his ankles. We see the blood flowing in streaks down his body, and, deeply moved, we turn aside from the kind of life we once lived and take our stand beneath the cross of Jesus. We die to our old selves, we die to our sin, we die to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we identify with the cross of Christ.

When James Calvert went out as a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands, the captain of the ship sought to turn him back. "You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages," he cried. Calvert only replied, "We died before we came here."

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#), the German Christian who died in Nazi hands, once said: When God calls a man, he bids him come and die.

Someone once asked the German Christian [George Mueller](#), the secret of his **victorious Christian life**. He replied: There came a day when George Mueller died, utterly died! No longer did his own desires, preferences, and tastes come first. He knew that from then on Christ must be all in all.

My pastor during my college years in Columbia, South Carolina, was [Dr. H. Edwin Young](#), who taught me so much about preaching and pastoring. One day I was in his office, and he asked me if I knew the secret of Christian victory. He said, "You have to die to yourself every day. You have to put 220 volts to yourself every day--Galatians 2:20. 'I am crucified with Christ.'"

Someone once saw this sign in the window of a dry-cleaning and dying business:

**We dye to live, we live to dye; the more we dye,  
the more we live; and the more we live, the more we dye.**

That's the slogan for the Christian.

One of the best phrases in the Bible on this subject comes upon us unexpectedly in the book of Acts. In Acts 20, the Apostle Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, and his friends were deeply worried. They knew he was walking into the lion's den, that he was likely to be arrested or worse, and they were desperately trying to dissuade him. The elders of the Ephesian church were heartbroken, for they felt they would never see Paul's face again. Their mood was grim and somber, but Paul seemed determined to proceed on to Jerusalem against the advice of every one of his friends and advisors, including his closest associate, Luke.

Against that backdrop, we come to Acts 21: After we had torn ourselves away from them (the Ephesian elders) we put out to sea and sailed straight to Cos. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Patara. We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. But when our time was up, we continued on our way....

They finally reached the coast of Israel, their ship sailing into the harbor of Caesarea. Verse 10 continues: After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound but to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Now look at Acts 21:14: When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Paul knew it was God's will for him to go to Jerusalem, to be arrested, to suffer imprisonment and possibly death. That was to be his arena for ministry, and he was willing, not only to be bound, but to die. But his friends were terrified of God's will in this matter, they didn't want him to go to Jerusalem, they wanted him to turn about-face and head as far away from Jerusalem as possible, away from the danger, away from the conflict. And they tried to persuade him thusly. But the text says, When he would not be dissuaded, we (the "we" indicates Luke, the writer, was in league with them) gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

That is the operative phrase: We must give up our own rights and desires and say, "The Lord's will be done." As Jesus put it in the Garden, "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done."

There comes a time when we must decide to stop living for money and pleasure and power and for our own plans and ambitions in life. We give up our rights, and say, "The Lord's will be done." We give up the ownership of our own lives, we give up control of our own life's agenda, and we say, "The Lord's will be done." (Mt 26:39)

Sometimes we call this a decision of "Full Surrender," but whatever we call it, it is an identification with the cross of Jesus Christ. We are crucified with Christ.

### **The Exchanged Life**

But let's read on, for this text not only talks about the Crucified Life, but about the Exchanged Life: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.... It was [Hudson Taylor](#) who first called this the Exchanged Life. The idea is this: None of us can ever live the Christian life in our own strength and power. None of us can resist temptation by our own will-power and determination. None of us can live as we should just by our own efforts. Only Jesus Christ can successfully live the genuine victorious Christian life--it is, after all, His life--but when we come to Him in full surrender, He invades us by His Holy Spirit and He begins living His life through us.

So the Christian life is not something that we try to accomplish in ourselves for Christ, it is something He accomplishes through us by the power of his indwelling Holy Spirit. What does this mean?

It means that, in a very real sense, I'm not preaching today, but Jesus Christ is preaching through me.

We don't have to parent our children in the sense of our doing it in our own wisdom and ability. Jesus Christ wants to parent them through us.

We don't have to withstand temptation through sheer, solitary will-power. Jesus Christ resists the temptation through us. Do you see what a different way this is of looking at it?

Now there are two levels to this indwelling, outflowing life--the first being the Christian experience itself. Galatians 5:22-note says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control." Nine different attitudes are listed there as being the fruit of the Holy Spirit. What are they? They are attitudes and character traits. And whose attitudes and character traits are they? They are the character qualities of Christ Jesus. The personality of our Lord was characterized by these nine qualities: Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

The great teaching of the Exchanged Life--of Galatians 2:20--is that we die to ourselves every day and Christ lives through us every day, and his very personality is being reproduced in our lives by the indwelling of his Spirit, which is called in Romans 8:9-note, "The Spirit of Christ." (**Ed:** See study on The Holy Spirit - Abundant Life)

One of the best illustrations of this comes from the book [The Christ Life For Your Life](#) by [F. B. Meyer](#). Dr. Meyer was traveling one

day by train and he saw a man in his compartment reading the famous devotional book, [Imitation of Christ](#) by [Thomas à Kempis](#). Dr. Meyer said, "That's a grand book." "Yes, it is," replied the fellow passenger.

"But I have found something better," said Meyer.

"Better?"

"Yes."

"How?"

Dr. Meyer then proceeded to use the illustration of painting a picture. He said, in effect, "What if I saw a beautiful masterpiece in the museum and I wanted a copy for myself? I could try to imitate it, to copy it onto a canvas using my own abilities of imitation. But how different the picture would look if the spirit of the great artist himself could somehow flow into my heart, into my mind, into my body, into my fingers and paint the picture through me."

It isn't a matter of trying to imitate the Lord Jesus. Why not let him come into your life and fill you with his Spirit and begin to live his wonderful life through you? That is the first level of the Exchanged Life.

The second level in which the Exchanged Life applies is this--not only in Christian living, but in Christian service. The person who first helped both me and my wife see the radical nature of this truth was [Major Ian Thomas](#) from England. During World War II, he served with the British Expeditionary forces in Belgium and took part in the evacuation at Dunkirk. He later became a far-famed evangelist and Bible teacher, and the founder of Capernwray Missionary and the Torchbearers.

But the real defining moment for Ian Thomas came when he was a young man at the university. He was leader of the InterVarsity Fellowship group on his campus in London, and he poured himself into campus evangelism with incredible zeal. He later recalled, "Out of a sheer desire to win souls, to go out and get them, I was a windmill of activity, until, at the age of 19, every moment of my day was packed tight with doing things: preaching, talking, counseling.

"The only thing that alarmed me was that nobody was converted! That gets a little discouraging after a bit, doesn't it? The more I did, the less happened; and it was not a question of insincerity. The prospects and the environment were good; there was plenty of ammunition and plenty of target, but just nothing happened! I became deeply depressed, because I really loved the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart; I wanted to be made a blessing to my fellow men. But I discovered that forever doubling and redoubling my efforts, rushing here and dashing there, taking part in this campaign, taking part in that campaign, preaching in the morning, preaching in the evening, talking to the Bible class, witnessing to this one, counseling with another, did nothing, nothing to change the utter barrenness and uselessness of my activity.

"Thus by the age of 19, I had been reduced to a state of complete exhaustion spiritually, until I felt that there was no point in going on."

But one night in November of that year, Ian Thomas, about midnight, got down on his knees in his room and wept in sheer despair. "Oh, God," he said, "I know that I am saved. I love Jesus Christ. I am perfectly convinced that I am converted. With all my heart I have wanted to serve Thee. I have tried to my uttermost and I am a hopeless failure!"

Suddenly a phrase from a Bible verse flashed into Thomas' mind: Christ, who is your life! It hit him with terrific force and it seemed God was saying this to him: "For seven years with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for Me, on My behalf, the life that I have been waiting for seven years to live through you. Now supposing I am your life... I am your strength... I am your victory in every area of life."

And Ian Thomas relinquished his own role in his own life, saying to the Lord: "If this is true, then I am going to thank Thee for it in sheer cold-blooded faith, with no evidence to support it, and nothing but a history of failure behind me. I am going to thank Thee that if Thou art my life, and this is true, then Thou art my strength, Thou art my power, Thou art my future. Thou art the One Who is going to go out now, clothed with me, to do all that I so hopelessly have been trying to do in the past seven years."

Shortly after, Thomas was to speak to a boys' Bible class. On his way, he said, "Well now, Lord, Thou art going to speak to that boys' class, isn't it wonderful? Yesterday I thought I was going to, but Thou art going to now!"

He arrived to find about 90 boys gathered for the class. He just spoke simply about the Lord Jesus, then invited any who wanted to receive Him as Lord and Savior to see him afterward. Thirty boys stayed behind. And that was the beginning of an extraordinary lifetime of fruitful ministry.

Now is this a biblical approach to Christian living and to the ministry?

Listen to what Paul said in Romans 15:18-note: I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God....

Again, in 2 Corinthians 5:20-note: We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

Again, in 2 Corinthians 13:3, Paul said: Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

In 2 Timothy 4:17, the apostle said: But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear.

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless not I, but Christ liveth in me--living his life and doing his work. So Galatians 2:20 teaches us about the Relinquished Life, the Exchanged Life, and finally, about the Trusting Life.

### **The Trusting Life**

Look at the last half of the verse: 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 in) the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

The Bible says: This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Romans 1:17-note tells us that the Christian Life is one of faith from first to last, for it is written the just shall live by faith.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee--for he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord, the Lord, there is everlasting strength (see Isaiah 26:3-4).

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me," said the Lord in John 14.

What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee, said the Psalmist. Or as the hymnist put it:

### [IN HEAVENLY LOVE ABIDING](#)

In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;  
And safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here.  
The storm may rage around me, my heart may low be laid;  
But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed.

Wherever he may lead me, no want shall turn me back;  
My Savior is beside me, and nothing can I lack.  
His wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never dim.  
He knows the way he taketh, and I will walk with Him.

Green pastures are before me which yet I have not seen;  
Bright skies will soon be o'er me where darkest clouds have been;  
My hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free;  
My Savior has my treasure and I will walk with Him.

The Christian Life is nothing less than the Relinquished Life. It is the Exchanged Life--both in Christian living and in Christian service. And it is the Trusting Life:

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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

And that is the life that wins.

**Galatians 1:18**  
**A FORTNIGHT WITH PETER AND PAUL IN JERUSALEM**  
**James McGinlay**

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days (Gal 1:18).

One evening about nineteen hundred years ago, our New Testament friend, Peter was sitting alone in his little home in Jerusalem, reading a psalm of David and sipping a cup of tea before retiring for the night. He heard a knock at the door, and upon opening it he gazed for the first time in his life into the face of Saul of Tarsus, now become by God's grace, the apostle Paul. Upon noticing Peter's chagrin, Paul put his hand upon Peter's shoulder and reassuringly said, "Don't worry, Peter."

It's all different now, it's all different now, Through His great salvation, I'm a new creation, And it's all different now.

"Oh, I know," said Peter, "that there has been a tremendous change, but when I think of what you used to be and when I realize that in this very town, and on this very street, there are widows and orphans for whose misery you are responsible, I just can't help being a little nervous lest you fall from grace and break out again."

Drying a tear from his eye and gripping the hand of his new friend, Paul reaffirmed what he had already declared, that he was a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things had passed away, and behold, all things had become new.

Peter, by this time, had regained sufficient composure to say, "Come right in," or as we say in Scotland, "Come ben the hoose."

So Peter, the humble, homely, uncouth, Galilean fisherman, and the aristocrat, highly educated, cultured, religious Saul, sat down at the fireside and began a two-week vacation together.

What, but the Gospel, and the salvation it brings, can break down social, religious, financial, and intellectual barriers, and enable two opposites like Paul and Peter to become the best of friends. Talk about the Lions, and the Moose, and Elks, the Masons, the Odd Fellows, and the Orangemen, no greater and more blessed fraternity ever functioned on the face of God's earth than the fellowship of the redeemed. Black and white, red and yellow, oriental and occidental, all washed in the blood of the Lamb. Won't it be a wonderful day when in Christ Jesus, "man to man the world o'er, shall brothers be for a' that"? Come with me and listen in for a little while to:

### **Their First Conversation Together**

Without indulging the speculative or imaginative we can be reasonably sure that the conversation of these two men centered in and around Christ. Subsequent to Paul's conversion and prior to the commencement of his public ministry, he went into Arabia and, "after three years he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter." Paul knew that Peter was an intimate of Jesus, and anxious to get first-hand information concerning His earthly life, His wonderful works, His awful death, and glorious resurrection, Paul commenced a casual interrogation of his new friend and brother.

"Tell me, Peter, where and when, and how, did you first become a Christian?"

"Well, it happened in this way. John the Baptist was baptizing and preaching in Bethabara, beyond Jordan. As he talked about Jesus, lo and behold, Jesus came along. When John saw Him he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Among those who heard John and saw Jesus was my brother Andrew. One day he said to me, 'We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.' Nothing would do but that I go with him to where Jesus was. When Jesus saw me He said, 'Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.'

Praise God, I became so enamored of my Savior that I left my boat and my nets and for three years, with Him and ten others, and a rascal by the name of Iscariot, we sailed the sea, tramped the roads, and climbed the hills."

"Tell me, Peter, whose son do you think Jesus really was?"

"What do you mean, Paul?"

"Well, just this. Already I have heard that Joseph, the carpenter, was His father, and although I know better, I would be so happy to hear from your lips a confirmation of my personal conviction."

In less time than I take to tell it, Peter started in, for when Peter got a chance to exalt Christ he needed no coaxing.

"One day, Paul, on the coast of Caesarea Phillippi, Jesus gathered us together, and after inquiring from the rest of the disciples what people said about Him, He looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'Whom do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?' Do you know, Paul, until that moment I was a little hazy concerning His Sonship, but when I opened my mouth to answer I seemed possessed of a supernatural wisdom, and I replied, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' To my utter amazement He said, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but my Father in heaven.'"

Isn't it wonderful, dear friends, to have such a revelation, through which our natural and national prejudices are broken down? It

matters not to me whether you are Irish, English, or Scotch, a German, a Hollander, or a Swede, Chinese, African-American, or native American, if you have discovered that Jesus is the Son of the living God, let me shake your hand, for we are brothers. Hallelujah!

Before they lay down that night, Paul recited to Peter the story of his apprehension by Christ on the Damascus Road, his conversion, and his call to the ministry. As Peter listened with open mouth and moistened eyes to the triumph of the Gospel in a murderer's life, Paul waxed eloquent in the rehearsal of the details beginning from the moment when at noon he was stricken to the ground and blinded, until in a house "on the street called Straight" he prayed his first real prayer and received his marching orders from his God.

### **A Visit to Gethsemane and Calvary**

Next morning ere the sun had risen, the two sinners, saved by grace, were out of bed. A simple meal was prepared and quietly eaten, for both men were thinking more than they were talking.

"Where would you like to go first, Paul? I could escort you through the temples and other places of beauty and interest around Jerusalem, but it is just as you say, I am your host, you are my guest, command me."

"If the choice is proffered to me, Peter, I would like to visit the battlefield upon which our blessed Redeemer, single-handed and alone, conquered sin and death and hell for us."

So across the brook Kidron into Gethsemane's garden they went. Upon a little knoll they sat down and for a few moments not a word was uttered. With trembling voice, at last Peter began:

"Oh, Paul, what a night, shall I ever forget it! Right over there amidst those olive trees He kneeled in prayer. He asked us to pray also, but we fell asleep. Grieved, no doubt, by our lethargy, He visited us three times reminding us of our responsibility, saying in His own sweet, gentle way, 'Could ye not watch with me one hour?' Then with a look of pity in His eye, He said, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest.' Never before nor since have I witnessed such agony of spirit as we beheld that night when Jesus prayed in this very garden. 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Not long afterward we saw the lanterns, and the procession led by Judas, and you know the rest. For thirty pieces of silver Judas had sold his Christ, and betrayed Him into wicked hands."

Peter and Paul left the garden and the next thing we know they are standing with bared heads upon the hill called Calvary.

"I don't mind telling you, Peter," said Paul, "that among my chief reasons for visiting you was a desire to hear from you the truth about the dying day of God's Son."

"Oh, Paul, I hate to think of it. You have heard, no doubt, how I denied Him in Pilate's hall the night before. A little Roman servant girl sneered me right out of my religion, for with an oath I repudiated my allegiance to Him. I never saw Him again until with the holy women, I beheld Him walking up the hill bearing His cross. Beneath the burden He fell, and we sobbed in unison, 'My God, He is dead!' But no, He arose, yet so weakened in body that another, named Simon of Cyrene, had to carry His cross the rest of the way. We actually saw the brutal soldiers lay Him upon His back and drive the nails into His hands and feet. And do you know, Paul, when that cross was uplifted and planted in the ground, I think even yet I hear the tearing of His muscles. As with pitying eyes He beheld His bloody assassins, He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

By this time Peter's voice so trembled that he could not go on. There on that place where Jesus suffered, bled, and died, Paul the murderer and Peter the fisherman wept together.

O Jesus, Lord, how can it be, That Thou shouldst give Thy life for me? To bear the cross and agony, In that dread hour on Calvary! O Calvary! dark Calvary! Where Jesus shed His blood for me; O Calvary! blest Calvary! 'Twas there my Savior died for me.

Peter, resuming his description of that fearful event, said, "From the sixth hour until the ninth the heavens were darkened, and right there from that spot where you now stand I heard Him cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' The crowd responded with sneers while one of them took a sponge filled with vinegar and gave Him to drink. Weaker and weaker He grew, until at last He cried with a loud voice, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' and He gave up the spirit."

As Paul wiped the tears from his eyes he said, "Peter, what is your particular theory of the Atonement?"

"Why, bless your heart, Paul, I never heard of such a thing."

"Well, the modernists say that just as a soldier dies on the battlefield for his country, and a mother suffers and dies giving birth to a child, so Christ died for the world."

"Blasphemy!" shouted Peter. "The death of our Redeemer must never be compared with the sacrificial death of any other before or since. 'Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' He tasted the misery of ten thousand hells in order that we poor sinners might escape the agony of one."

To this Paul replied, "What do you think of the martyr theory? That is, He merely sealed with His blood the principles He preached with His lips. Like every reformer, whether political or religious, He laid down His life for the cause He loved."

By this time Peter's eyes were flashing indignation and taking Paul by the lapel of the coat, he said, "Brother, if you and I are going to be successful ministers of the Gospel, we had better forget all this theory business and stick to the one sublime fact that Christ died for the ungodly. His death was no accident—He was born to bleed. Although He was crucified by wicked hands, He was slain by the 'determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.'"

"God bless you, Peter, with you I agree, and in His strength, and by His help we shall tell poor guilty sinners the truth and nothing but the truth concerning the Cross."

So, down from Golgotha's hill they went, back to Peter's house, and after a season of prayer in which they thanked God for the atoning work of Christ, they retired for the night to sleep the "sleep of the just."

### **Their Meditation at the Tomb**

The next place of sacred interest visited by Peter and Paul was Joseph of Arimathaea's tomb, not two angels in white apparel, but two sinners saved by grace, and rejoicing in the living Christ. There was the stone, but rolled away, and upon it our friends sat down. Paul broke the silence with a question.

"Tell me, Peter, do you believe that Jesus Christ arose from the dead? I am not talking about His Spirit. I refer to His corporeal resurrection. Did He or did He not rise in a body? Now don't look so bewildered until I have explained the reason for my apparent infidelity. The clever religious peddlers of pleasant platitudes are telling folks that Jesus is alive, and the gullible public think that these humanists are supernaturalists. I interrogated one of them the other day, and the way I caught him was by asking, 'Do you believe that on the morning of the third day Joseph's tomb was empty?' Then the rascal began to squirm and confess that the resurrection to him meant the survival of personality divorced from a body interred."

"Oh, pshaw, Paul! You didn't fall for that humbug, did you?"

"Glory to God, I didn't, Peter. I have come to you for first-hand information concerning the Resurrection. I hope to write an article about it some day and when I do, believe me, I shall make no apology for my faith in the living Lord."

"Well," said Peter, "I saw the empty tomb, I entered the place where He lay, and saw the grave clothes as He had neatly folded them away. On the morning of the third day, in the darkness of the sepulcher, He awakened, lit the lamp of immortality and walked out, and the lamp has been burning ever since."

Death could not keep his prey, Jesus, my Savior! He tore the bars away, Jesus, my Lord! Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes; He arose a victor from the dark domain, And He lives for ever with His saints to reign; He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose! —Robert Lowry

"Why, Peter, how true it is if Christ be not risen our preaching is vain, and our faith is vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we testified of God that He raised up Christ whom He raised not up. If so be that the modernists are right."

Oh, friends, how we ought to thank God for the faith that Peter and Paul possessed in the resurrection of our Lord. How wonderful to think that we are worshiping not a dead, historic Jesus, but a living, scriptural Christ. We may disagree on many minor details concerning our religious beliefs, but if we agree that Christ not only rose from the dead, but is alive forevermore, we can have sweet friendship.

### **A Day on the Mount**

Before the fortnight's vacation was ended, at Paul's behest, Peter accompanied him to the hill from whence Christ went to heaven. One bonnie morning, while the sunbeams were playing amidst the pinnacles of the temple, and the birds were making melody in their hearts, our two friends were standing with bared heads upon Mount Olivet, the one anxious to hear the truth about the ascension, and the other eager to talk. Peter began while Paul listened.

"It was upon this mount, Brother Paul, (by this time they were calling each other brother) that we received from the resurrected Christ our marching orders. He didn't tell us to go and clean up the world by social service, nor dry up breweries by legislation; He gave us no commission to build hospitals and schools, nor to make the world safe for democracy."

At this juncture Paul interrupted Peter—

"Just a minute, Peter, aren't you in sympathy with social service, education, and the alleviation of human suffering?"

"Most certainly I am, Paul, and wherever the Gospel is preached, and the Word of God permitted to hold sway, you may be sure that these blessings will follow as by-products of salvation. Christ said to us, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age.'"

"In other words," said Paul, "instead of installing hot and cold water, shower baths, tiled floors and electric lights in the pig pen, our business is to deliver the prodigal from the fellowship of the swine and bring him to his Father's house."

"Precisely, Paul. I am so glad that you are straight on the great commission, for some of these fellows in Jerusalem are preaching politics and reformation, and already quite a few have exhausted the Bible and are now reviewing books on a Sunday night—they make me sick. Let you and me stick to the proclamation of the blessed old Gospel.

"I have digressed a little from what I was originally telling you, so I must get back to my story. While we were listening to Him give us our instruction, lo, He began to go up. None of us had ever witnessed the like before, and you can imagine with what consternation and bewilderment we beheld the unique spectacle."

"Honestly, Peter did you actually see Him ascend?" "Why Paul, until He vanished from our view we saw the print of the nails in the soles of His feet, and then a cloud received Him out of our sight, and we saw Him no more. While we looked steadily toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by us in white apparel who also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'

"Say, Paul, do you believe that Jesus is coming again?" "Most certainly I do, Peter, and apart from that wonderful event we have no blessed hope. We might well sigh in vain for the touch of a vanished hand, or the sound of a voice that is still. We will never fellowship with our departed dead again if Christ does not return. Some even now are saying that every time a dear old lady with a philanthropic heart gives a bag of potatoes or a shoulder of beef to a poor family, that Jesus has come again. Others teach that when we die, that is His return."

"Och, it is too silly to even refute, Paul. The angel told us that we shall see Him come in like manner as we saw Him go. What do we care for the carnal reasoning of benighted minds? If every man and woman on the face of God's earth disbelieved in the Lord's return I tell you, Paul, I'll continue to embrace what the angel told us on that memorable day upon this mount."

I can almost hear the "amens," and "hallelujahs" of these two redeemed sinners as they exulted in the blessed hope of the church. My friends, do you believe that Jesus is coming again? Never mind if your ignorance concerning the details of His advent has banished you to the wilderness of eschatological loneliness, so long as you know that Christ is coming again, God bless you, I am with you, shake my hand.

Jesus is coming! His saints to release, Coming to give to the warring earth peace; Sinning and sighing, and sorrow shall cease, Jesus is coming again!

What enabled those two apparent opposites to enjoy each other's company for two weeks? They believed in the deity of Christ, His blood atonement for sinners, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, and His coming again. Do you?

### **The Last Day of the Vacation**

After fourteen blessed days of fellowship together, Peter and Paul anticipated the morning of the fifteenth with mixed feelings, happy because they had met, and sad because they must part.

"Before I go, Peter, I would like to stand just once more on the spot where I stood the day Stephen was stoned to death."

"But Paul, why resurrect the past? Your sins, like mine, are under the blood, buried in the sea of God's forgiveness to be remembered no more against us."

"I am well aware of that, brother, but inasmuch as I purpose preaching the Gospel to people who now are as I once was, permit me to go back and allow the memory of that bloody day to remind me of the pit from whence I have been digged."

Together they stood at the historic place where the first martyr sealed his testimony with his blood. With glassy eye, and trembling voice, Paul rehearsed the pathetic details, especially his part in the crime.



"Ah, Peter, I am convinced that the first link in the chain of circumstances leading to my conversion was the home-going of Stephen. I hated the Christians, I despised the Nazarene, and agreed with the chief priest and other members of the synagogue that this man was a blasphemer. But do you know, as I listened to that marvelous message he delivered, it soon became apparent that he had something my religion had never produced in me. Afterward I learned that he was filled with the Spirit. My, didn't he handle that Old Testament like an expert! And when he concluded his message he shook his fist in our faces and said, 'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye.' When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

"The wilder they grew the calmer he became, and looking up into heaven he said, 'Behold, I see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.' That was enough. They stopped their ears and rushed upon him, cast him out of the city and stoned him to death."

"But Paul," said Peter, "did you throw any of the missiles?"

"No, Peter, but I held the coats of the rascals who did, therefore, I was just as guilty as they."

By this time Paul was sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Peter, when I get to heaven, I want to see my Savior first of all, and then Stephen. Although I went on breathing out slaughter against the Christians, the memory of Stephen's death could never be erased from my mind, and reacted upon me as an arrow in the side of a wounded stag. Just before he died, he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' and he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice,

'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

"Tomorrow you and I shall part company, Peter, maybe never more to meet on earth. Before we go shall we kneel on the spot where I contributed to that deacon's death, and promise God that by His grace we shall live as Stephen lived, preach as he preached, and if need be, die as he died."

Ah, dear friends, we have been visiting the historic arena of the world's redemption, we have been reminded of our past wicked lives. But just as Paul and Peter were forgiven, so are we. Their Christ is ours, and even though we may never be crucified upside down as was Peter, or decapitated as was Paul, for Jesus sake, let us have no desire to

... be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize And sailed through bloody seas. —Isaac Watts

The parting on the fifteenth day was sacred, for I am sure those two great men not only shook hands, but kissed each other good-bye. Peter stood at the door of his little house meditating upon the memory of these blessed days. He watched Saul of Tarsus, with a bundle over his shoulders, disappear around the bend of the road. I think I hear him say, "Thank God for the Gospel that can save a man like that, for grace that is greater than all our sin."

## **Galatians 2:20**

### **THE LOVE OF GOD**

#### **A J Gordon**

Some of us never get beyond the vague notion of a benevolent power working in and through the world, which somehow overrules all things for good. The above text expresses a more satisfying viewpoint as it sets forth the love of God in Jesus Christ. It reminds us that that love is individual. "Who loved me"—we could never be content with a love that had no focus. A good will that is so infinitely diffused that it touches everywhere in general and fails to touch anywhere in particular is no more than an ineffectual sentiment. Yet just here lies the difference between that "eternal goodness," so much on the lips of sentimental religionists, and the personal love for individual souls which the Gospel declares to us.

Love is a real, measurable, comprehensible thing. A ray of light can be analyzed. It is composed of several distinct and recognizable colors—red, violet, orange, and the rest. So love can be resolved into its constituents and shown to include such elements as sympathy, yearning, and goodwill. If these do not show themselves, we may conclude we are dealing with something else than real love. How is it with the benevolence we seem to find in nature? Is it sufficient to meet the needs of the human heart? We look up into the starry firmament at night and are powerfully reminded of God's wisdom and majesty. But so far from finding in it any suggestion of divine sympathy, such vastness quite excludes this from our thought. We are affected as was David: "When I consider thy

heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps 8:3-4). The heavens suggest the diffuseness of God's benevolence. For they stoop down impartially over the barest plain and the most squalid hut at night with all the stellar magnificence that they shed upon the blooming garden and the marble palace. But the discrimination and individuality so essential to personal love are absent.

The opening flower, again, with the exquisite tinting of leaf and petal, and the delicious fragrance that drops from its cup, witnesses to divine goodwill but never suggests compassion for me in my sin or sympathy with me in my sorrows and struggles. If we are looking for a basis for our piety, this defect is radical. A love that is not specific and personal can never meet man's deeper spiritual cravings. A love that cannot in its last analysis be reduced to an individual regard for me—and a pity for me, and a goodwill toward me, and a willingness to suffer and sacrifice for me—is not the love that my soul longs for and requires.

This truth is illustrated in our relations with each other. A young man is said, in popular language, to "fall in love" with a girl. That means that he cherishes for her a special affection and partiality. Philanthropy could never be a sufficient ground for marriage. A general goodwill and kindness toward the human race would never serve as strong enough motive for being joined in wedlock to some member of that race. Conjugal love must be individual and exclusive, or it will never warrant the sympathies and toils and sacrifices which the marriage relationship involves.

So with the love of God in Jesus Christ. It is infinitely general, and yet at the same time intensely specific. It is like the sun that fills the whole earth with its radiance and warmth, and yet mirrors itself in luminous fullness in each dewdrop. It embraces all creation in its compass, and yet concentrates itself with direct and, as it were, undivided ardor upon each separate soul. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16). "Who loved me and gave himself for me."

No single one of us, therefore, shall ever say in the world to come that he was left orphaned and unloved, that in the breadth and diffuseness of the divine affection it failed to compass one poor sinner. Many a guilty transgressor may utter the complaint and justly say: "No man cared for my soul" (Ps 142:4). But none can truly say: "The Christ who loved the world and died for the world forgot me in His salvation and lost sight of me among the multitude of the subjects of His grace." Christ's love can miss no one. A minuteness of regard which numbers each hair of our heads can never overlook an immortal soul amid the myriads of creation. So be assured, O sinner, that however vast be the boundaries of your Savior's love, it is a love that keeps sight of you, and goes out to you, and yearns for you in your disobedience, just as if there were no other in all His universe.

I have already suggested that love may be analyzed and shown to include such elements as pity, kindness, self-denial. The cross is the prism that accomplishes this wondrous analysis. The love of God shining through the cross in white, unbroken ray emerges from it revealed in all these lovely hues of "manifold," or as the word means exactly, "many-colored," grace. Through the cross we see divine compassion—love yearning for the miserable; divine forgiveness—love going out to the unworthy and sinful; and divine self-sacrifice—love giving itself for the lost. So, on the cross the often repeated declaration of Scripture that Christ loved us is translated into the most familiar of all dialect—that of human suffering. Thus the true measure of that "so loved the world" is furnished in the gift of Him who cared enough to die for the world.

"[He] loved me." "[He] gave himself for me." It is no part of Himself or His possessions, such as we give lightly and call self-denial, and not some precious fragment broken off and flung into the fire of sacrifice. That word "self" expresses as strongly as is possible the wholeness of being. It is the integer of our humanity which cannot be increased. And this He gave—for me. Shall so much of divine pity and loving-kindness and sacrifice directed toward me not warm me from the torpor of indifference? Shall I lie directly in the focus of eternal love and be so encased in hardness and frozen with unbelief that its genial rays shall utterly fail to penetrate my heart?

"Love so amazing, so divine" deserves my truest, tenderest devotion in return. His love measured itself by His sacrifice. "[He] loved me and gave himself for me." And if there is any who can rise to that high level of argument, he will say: "Even so I love and give myself to Him." Christ does not ask that our love should be equal to His. But He does ask that it shall be equal to ourselves. He made Himself the measure of His love. We are bound accordingly to make ourselves the measure of our love—and give ourselves. "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Co 5:15).

#### Keep Yourselves in the Love of God (Jude 21)

We are not told to keep ourselves in love with God, or to keep the love of God in ourselves. That might be impossible, for love is hard to control. We may do our best to incite our affections, to kindle our hearts into fervor, to exercise strong aspiration toward God. But with all this we may be constantly failing to advance in the divine love. A shipmaster says: "Sailing from Cuba we thought we had gained sixty miles in our course one day, but at the next observation we found we had lost more than thirty miles. The ship had been going forward by the wind but going backward by the current." The experience of the soul may be similar. While there is great activity in pushing ahead in Christian work, strong religious emotions, powerful spiritual exercises, we may be retrogressing all the while

because, though our sails are set for the gales of heaven, our keel dips into the undercurrent of the world. So the question becomes not how we feel, or how we “enjoy our mind,” as the saying is, or how much inner satisfaction or ecstasy we experience, but how deeply we are in communion with God.

Nothing is more difficult to estimate than our personal experiences. How much of our love is artificially generated? How much of our enjoyment is the effervescence of good spirits? How much of our happy feeling is merely self-stimulated excitement? These things are difficult to determine. So God does not set us to careful examination of our spiritual frames and feelings. The eye of faith, like the eye of the body, looks outward, not inward. If we turn it within, the consequent light may be only the stimulated flash of the optic nerve. Our emotions, that is to say, may be largely the result of our physical states. What we call “religious depression,” when we look back upon it, may prove to have been due to the damps and vapors of bodily sickness that were clouding the soul. So some period of rare spiritual elevation may be traceable to an unusually high tide in the ebbing and flowing of our physical health. We would emphasize, therefore, the importance of drinking constantly at the eternal fountain as the only way we may be sure of a well within us “springing up into everlasting life” (Jn 4:14).

Our temptation is to reverse God's order, to let the action be from self toward God instead of from God toward self. I sometimes think that the same ambition which leads men to strive for originality in thought leads them to strive for originality in spiritual things. They wish to be givers instead of receivers. “Genius,” somebody has said, “is the ability to light one's own fire.” The ability, that is, to strike off ideas which nobody has expressed before. And we think to be geniuses in religion and produce sparks of love and devotion which draw the eye of God toward ourselves. But God is the true originator. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Our affections are but the resultant and return of His. Let us see to it that we receive before we attempt to give.

We have five senses that bring us into communication with the external world. We have only to open our eyes that our whole body may be full of light. We have only to open our ears that our whole body may be full of melody. Strange folly would it be to close the eyelid and try to get light by exciting the optic nerve to give out flashes of fire, or to close the ear to external harmonies and try to get music in the soul by some artificial vibration of the eardrums. And shall we seek to quicken our love by working up our emotions? That may result in flashes of ecstasy and scintillations of enthusiasm. But for the love that endures, that keeps on in calm, growing, and deepening exercise, we have simply to open the soul to God, and take in all the rich and abundant manifestations of His love that He has given us in the person of Christ and in the revelation of the Word. A single hour's study of the New Testament, a single hour's contemplation of the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ will do more to help us in our purpose to love the Lord our God than months and years of introspection and heart manipulation.

#### Acquaint Now Thyself with Him [God], and Be at Peace (Job 22:21)

Remember that acquaintance can come through no casual contact: Calling on God in the morning and leaving our visiting card of devotion, but having no care as to whether we find Him at home and really catch sight of His face; talking with God through an interpreter, through the minister or the sacraments or the hymnbook—but knowing nothing of real and intimate and personal conversation with Him. This is not acquaintance with God. It is a kind of society etiquette like that which requires that we be polite to our neighbors even when we have no real interest in them. Beware of formalism. It is the decorum of religion. And what will it avail, though we be deeply skilled therein, if we know not what it is to have “fellowship . . . with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3)? What earnest prayer, what profound meditation upon the Word, what chastening of the inward and the outward cross there must be in order that we may truly be acquainted with God. The sweetest expositions of Scripture are, for this reason, found in lives rather than in learned books.

#### I Will Bear the Indignation of the Lord (Mic 7:9)

Do not imagine that because God blots out transgressions He therefore blots out the distinction between right and wrong, between good and evil, between sin and holiness. “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond,” says Scripture (Jer 17:1). God uses the graving tool to emphasize the reality of evil as well as the eraser to obliterate the penalties thereof. And while the Gospel sweeps the tablet of our life with one blessed text: “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn 1:7), it also uncovers the handwriting of the law, deep-graven and ineffaceable, “The wages of sin is death” (Ro 6:23) and “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn 3:4).

If one expects the mercy of God, he must put himself under the law of God. He must say, “I have sinned,” and submit himself to the consequences of sin, the indignation of the Lord. And there is no one who does not deserve that indignation in view of our selfishness, our sinfulness, our love of the present world, and our forgetfulness of God. If for one hour we could see ourselves as God sees us, if the untempered light of His uncovered face could be let in upon us, there could be no escaping His judgment. We have sometimes turned up a stone in a field just to see the nameless brood of hideous insects underneath as they rushed in every direction to hide themselves from the revealing sun. So if the shield of respectability were suddenly removed, if the sanction of false custom were lifted, if human palliations and excuses were taken away, and our hearts were left open and naked before Him with whom we have to do, what a hurrying and hiding there would be from the face of Him that sits on the throne! What a shrinking away

of secret sins, of enmity and jealousy and falsehood and impurity! In these days of shallow theology there is nothing more needful than frequent days of thorough self-examination. We ought now and again to take out a search warrant for our own hearts, and as we come to know the evil that is in us say: "Strike, Lord, for I deserve the worst. I will not evade. I will not extenuate. I will not contend. 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him' (Mic 7:9 a)."

But . . . Afterward (Heb 12:11)

It is possible for a man to get a blessing even out of a sinful past. He who can strike the lowest note in the scale of regret can often strike the highest note in the scale of exultation. It was because Paul knew himself the "chief of sinners" that he was able to lift his voice so high in praise of Christ, "the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely." "The sting of death is sin," writes Paul (1 Co 15:56). We may say that sin is equally the sting of life. For the memory of wrong-doing is the one and only thing that can make us miserable in life and death alike. But if that remembrance of sin be accompanied with the remembrance of mercy, so that we can say, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Ro 5:20), it may become the source of unspeakable joy.

It has been discovered that the sting of a bee has purposes other than pain for its enemies. When the cell is filled with pure honey and the lid is finished, a drop of formic acid from the poison bag connected with the sting is added to the honey by perforating the lid. This formic acid preserves the honey from fermentation. Most insects that have a stinging apparatus like that of the bee are collectors and storers of honey. How blessed the parable here! As often as my guilty past comes before me and sin thrusts its sting into my conscience, I see that this is only to keep the honey of grace sweet and pure, making me love much because I am forgiven much. O memory, drive the sting of sin deep into my heart, and I shall cry out: "Yes, I have sinned; but the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." O Accuser of Christians, remind me if you will that the sting of death is sin. I will appeal to the Advocate of the brethren on high, saying, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9). There is nothing that can keep the honey of assurance so sweet as the thrusts of sin's envenomed sting.

Ye Who Love the Lord, Hate Evil (Ps 97:10)

There are both attractions and repulsions in Christian love. It is capable not only of warming and comforting, but also, when raised to its highest temperature, of burning and destroying. The Christian love that always keeps a medium temperature where it delights in God and His attributes is not all that is required. God wants a love that will burn up sin in us as well as warm our religious affections. We ought to shudder and shrink from sin as we instinctively do from a serpent, which we hasten to bruise under our heel. Is there anything more repulsive than the serpent charmer who has deliberately schooled himself to fondle snakes, carrying them in his bosom and letting them twine about his neck? But there are professed Christians who treat sins in the same way, and learn to live on good terms with them. Some learn to live in covetousness, some in worldly fashion, some in self-indulgence. They become so accustomed to these things that they result in no pangs of conscience.

There are two classes of sins that we are most likely to encounter: indulgence of things forbidden and excessive use of things permitted. True Christians may fall into either, but no Christian can remain in either happy, content, satisfied. We all of us tend to a more or less fixed condition. We are becoming inured to sin so that it sits easily on our conscience, or we are becoming assimilated to holiness so that sin hurts and discomforts us. Our condition is determined by the relative strength of the two elements. Water will quench fire, or fire will quench water according to which is stronger. A pail of water on a little fire will put it out, but a powerful flame on a little water will evaporate and dissipate it. So if the fire of Christian love is strong and steady it will quench our besetting sin, but if the love of the world be dominant in us it will quench the Spirit.

Blessed be God for the Gospel of His Son with its provision not only for forgiving but for destroying sin. Lifted up, He draws all men to Him, but in His drawing He separates. As the ray of sunlight falling upon a muddy pool draws up a clear and crystalline drop of water and leaves behind the soil that was mingled with it, so Christ draws the sinner out of his sin, His love repelling the evil at the same time that it attracts the evildoer. In this He is our example. We should love God and lost souls for whom He gave His Son, while with great vehemence we hate the sin that nailed Him to the cross.

Who . . . hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col 1:13)

God deals first of all with persons. He forgives the sinner, not the sin; He changes the man, not his clothes. He translates us into the kingdom. This needs emphasis because there is so much second-hand dealing with the Lord, through creeds and conduct and covenant, while the soul holds off from Him and stands on its own ground. "I believe in Christ," says one, "but I make no profession." So he uses his faith as he does his opera glasses, to seem to be near the Lord while he is far from Him. So with those who contribute of their means to the church though otherwise they hold themselves aloof. We seek not yours but "you," says the apostle.

A man's weight is in his personality, not in his property. And the Lord requires the weight of our influence to be thrown into His cause. A man's weight can never be known if he has one foot on the scales and the other on the floor. So we cannot estimate your real moral and spiritual heft and register it on God's side, so long as you have one foot in the world and the other in the church. Think of

this and don't delay longer to identify yourself definitely with God's people. He does not want you to stay out and give in your influence and your contributions to the church, but to come within and give out your influence and blessing to the world. The kingdom of God ought to be the radiating center from which your life should shed forth blessings instead of a circumference on which you touch only casually and occasionally.