

Under the Royal Standard

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, I'd like us to think for a little while today about this 20th verse in the chapter that we read in Galatians chapter 2. The 20th verse, particularly the middle part of the verse.
- We read, 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.
- The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Now, as we've mentioned in the past, every text has a context.
- And the context of this letter to the Galatians, especially perhaps this chapter 2, is that the Galatians, having received the gospel of salvation, were now in danger of falling back again into what was effectively the way of the world, but which they convinced themselves was in fact religious.
- It was in fact simply a doctrine of works, thinking that they could do enough to be good and to be acceptable before God. Falling back into believing that it was their works and their own sense of physical and practical goodness which would somehow save them.
- [1 : 2 0] And Paul warns against that again and again in this particular letter. Now, if one were to follow the doctrine that the Galatians had become guilty of, there would be two main problems with it.
- First of all, if having been once cleansed and forgiven by Christ, if now then we must do good works in order to be saved, then we're effectively setting ourselves up as judges of what constitutes good and bad.
- You know, if we think, well now I'm going to do good and I'm going to be a good person and I'm going to do lots of good works and then I'll be acceptable to God. Who says that what we do is good or bad or indifferent?
- Who judges? Is it God's word? Is it God himself or is it us? And the fact of the matter is that once we descend to the level of deciding, you know, I'm going to do good, I'm going to be a good person, I'm going to follow through on my righteousness, we have set ourselves up as the judge of what constitutes good and bad, good and evil.
- And we put ourselves into the place of God. Now, God himself has already judged that the law is not sufficient in itself.
- [2 : 4 3] It can only ever restrain from evil. It cannot produce positive good in sinners. As we read in the book of Job, chapter 14 and verse 4, who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
- Not one. We are unclean by nature in and of ourselves. We're born and conceived in sin. So nothing that we do can ever produce good in and of itself because no matter how many rules we try to follow or how much good we try to do, we are of ourselves unclean.
- Even if we're washed and cleansed once by Christ, we just get dirty again. Our bodies tell us that, you know, illustrate that. If you have a shower on Monday, you can't be surprised if by Thursday or Friday, you might actually need a wash again.

Not because you're rolling about in the mud. It's just the natural way of the body. It accumulates sweat and dirt and odours and all manner of things. We need to keep on being cleaned every single day.

We need to constantly be cleansed in our body and also in our soul. We cannot of ourselves do good. And the law itself can only restrain evil.

[3 : 58] It cannot produce positive good. God requires divine perfection. He requires absolute purity. And the Galatian heresy and all our worldly do-gooding cannot produce or offer that standard of righteousness.

So that's the first thing. We set ourselves up as the judges of what's good and bad. And we can't produce that positive good. The second thing that's the problem is that if we were to follow that Galatian heresy, it would imply that Christ's sacrifice was effective only as a one-off.

That, yeah, we've been saved by Christ and washed and cleansed from our sins, but that was that. That was then. Now, once. And now we have to do it ourselves. The rest of it. That would take away, you know, from Christ's sacrifice.

That it was once at that moment we wiped the slate clean through the blood of Christ, but now you're on your own. You have to sink or swim. You have to do it ourselves. We have to now start living out our own righteousness.

What that would effectively do is we would have to be fulfilling the law ourselves. We'd have to be doing perfect righteousness. It wouldn't change us. It wouldn't solve the problem of our fallenness.

[5 : 17] It just keeps on sending us back to the beginning to try again. You know, even if we got time after time these one-offs, cleansing, and then we were on our own, and each day we had to start again from square one, trying to be good, trying to keep all the rules and regulations, trying to be perfect, trying to be holy, we would keep on failing.

And no matter how many times we got sent back to the beginning, back to square one, we would always fall as soon as we began. And what this heresy would do is it limits the sacrifice of Christ as though it were only partially effective and could only get us some of the way to heaven, but not all.

It's a heresy which would ultimately send us to hell because if we have to be joint earners of our salvation, effectively joint saviors if we ever could be in that sense, with Christ, then we're always going to fail.

And that would mean that all that Christ had gone through, all that he had suffered on the cross, all that he had been through, if it's not for everything that he did it, then it's effectively for nothing.

Because if it doesn't suffice, if it's not enough, if it's not sufficient to save us completely, then it hasn't really done the job at all. And all that Christ has gone through, if it's not for everything, then it ends up being for nothing.

[6 : 50] It's dishonor to Christ, ultimately. You know, if you were to think of soldiers on a campaign, and let's say they get into a tight spot and they're under pressure, they're being fired on from all sides, and they send in a helicopter to evacuate them.

But the helicopter's a bit of a distance away. The evacuation point, they have to run for it, fighting as they go and shooting back at their enemies who are pursuing them. Let's say that the evacuation point is a mile away, and they manage and cover almost all the ground, but one or two of them, they get as far as the rail of the helicopter, or the last step, and then they get shot, or then they fall, or then they get captured.

Has that evacuation succeeded partially, or has it not succeeded at all in their case? You're either saved completely, or you're not saved at all.

A partial evacuation is no evacuation. A partial salvation is no salvation. And if Christ doesn't redeem us completely and totally, then it's no comfort to say, well, we almost got to heaven.

We almost touched base. We almost made it to safety, because almost is lost. Remember what King Agrippa said to Paul in Acts of the Apostles, where he says, almost that persuadeth me to be a Christian.

[8 : 12] Almost is not enough. You know, what we find is that if Christ does not do it all, then we end up not being saved. It is dishonouring to Christ to suggest that his sacrifice is not enough, that we have to do a bit ourselves.

Hebrews tells us, chapter 7, verse 25, wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

He saves them, and he saves them to the uttermost. It's not partial. It's not a wee bit, and we do a wee bit. It's completely and totally. So ultimately, the Galatian heresy was not only ruinous to souls, it was also dishonouring to Christ.

But the truth of the gospel is that if we are trusting and believing in Christ as our Saviour, then it's not the case that having our past sins paid for by Christ on the cross, that we're somehow on our own to sink or swim, to do our best now that he's once wiped away the sins, but now it's up to you after that.

Now you have to do it. You have to sink or swim. But rather, that the price once paid was so high, so perfect, so full, so divine, that it has paid for all the sins we commit if we are trusting in him.

[9 : 45] All the sins we commit, including any that we may end up committing between now and the day of our death. It is such a high price that has been paid that it is sufficient for all our sin, for all of our life.

It is a once and for all. It is a, in one sense, it's a one-off, but it's not a one-off that only suffices for a little while. It's a once and for all sacrifice for all the sins of his believing children for all of their lives.

Now if that is the case, it means that whatever happens to me, my sin is forgiven. However I fall or fail, my sin is forgiven. That Christ has paid the price for me and for every sinner who is trusting in him.

And that's good news. It's good news for people like me that keep on failing. It's good news for sinners such as I am. It's good news for each and every one of us who puts our faith and our trust in Christ.

It is good news and it is great joy. It's like a whole new life that we receive in Christ. But it's even better than that because Christ not only died, but he rose again.

[11 : 08] And having died once, he can never die again. You know, how many times can somebody actually die? If they die once, that's pretty much it. Christ has died and so he can never die again.

But having died, he rose again and conquered death by his resurrection. He's alive now. And the life of Christ dwells not only at the right hand of the Father in glory, it dwells also in the lives of each of his born again sons and daughters here on earth.

And once that life of Christ is in them, that life never dies. The life of Christ can never die again.

Once it's in us, his sons and daughters, it can never die again. And they can never perish. Even if their outward bodies must fail and decay and perish.

It's like, you know, if we were an electrical device with a short life battery and the battery was running down pretty fast and we were about to just conk out altogether.

[12 : 19] Instead of having that battery that was pretty useless and short life, instead of that, we were plugged in to the ultimate power source that would keep us going forever and ever and have sufficient power and energy for as long as this world lasts and beyond.

Then even if, you know, we chuck away the useless battery, what use was that? We now have a power source beyond anything we could imagine. We have a life force beyond anything we could imagine.

And also, even if the device itself might eventually begin to decay or crack or fall apart simply through age or decay or perishing, the power source never ends.

The power source keeps on going. So, even if outwardly we fall apart, even if we were outwardly to perish and our bodies are to decay, with our life now in Christ, we will never run out of power, never run out of righteousness, never run out of goodness or holiness, never run out of life because we are plugged in to the perfect life, the perfect righteousness of Christ.

The old battery file is pretty useless. We can chuck that away because it's no use to us now. It wasn't much use in the first place. It would only ever last a little short while but it's certainly no use to us now when we have the ultimate power source, the ultimate endless life in Christ.

[13 : 57] And even when the outward casing of this electrical device, to continue with our illustration, if that were to break, if that were to fall apart, if that were to just wither away and just weigh away, we can dispose of that.

It doesn't matter because the power supply will never end. To use our children's address analogy, the royal standard will never come down.

The royal standard will never fly at half-mast. The life of the crown, the life of the king never dies in the lives of his children.

And also, if we go back again to our verse, we read, 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. This is what we have, the faith of the Son of God which gives us life in all its fullness.

[15 : 00] Now, if we remember that the life we have in Christ is a life that we haven't stopped living ourselves here, but rather we continue in it.

We can say, well, yes, it's still me. It's still me living out my life. It's still me continuing, but everything now is changed. Just like if the queen comes and stays at my house, everything changes outwardly as well as inwardly.

In the flesh, I'm still me, but the flesh has less and less power over us. The flesh, although we still live in it, no longer controls what we do.

Just like if the queen lived in my house, who do you think that the security men and the protocol people are going to take their orders from? You think they're going to take orders from me? Because I can say, hey, this is my house.

You do as I say here. Or are they going to do what the queen tells them if she's staying there in my house? If the king dwells in my house, in my heart, that's who the orders are coming from.

[16 : 00] I know I may still dwell in the flesh with Christ dwelling in me, yet it is the king who is in charge of my life. And the flesh has less and less power over us.

It has less and less interest for us. If we think, you know, we've all been little children. And when we were little children, there were childhood toys that we loved.

And perhaps we had our favourite toy. And we might play with it, you know, for hours on end, day after day after day. We'd have particular ones that we might be obsessed with.

And our life consisted in playing with this particular toy endlessly. But, you know, the years pass and we go up and we move on.

And other things become interesting. And those things that were once our great obsession, they get put away into a cupboard. And eventually, as we grow older, perhaps they get stored away.

[16:57] Or they're covered under the stairs or up in the loft or whatever. And they just, I decide, they're still there. You know, if we were to rummage about in a box or in a dusty cupboard or whatever, we might come across and think, oh, I remember what age to play with this.

But it's not what controls our lives now. It's not the great obsession of our lives now. They're still there in the house, but they don't have the hold over us that they once did.

We've grown up. We've moved on. And now other things delight. I remember when I was a small child, the things that used to amuse grown-ups, I found incredibly boring.

I could never understand how they could have what seemed to me old people round to dinner or for a meal. And how, when we went off afterwards to play, they would sit just talking, just chatting endlessly over coffee or whatever.

and this, what seemed as mindless, boring conversation. They would just yak away for ages and they would laugh and they would seem to enjoy themselves if this is what they seemed to want to do.

[18:03] I could never understand how, when I liked my comic books with the pictures and funny stories and wee jokes and all these things, my dad would read these newspapers that had tiny little print and almost no pictures.

I mean, really boring. Why would grown-ups be interested in these things? Why do they watch the news and current affairs programmes instead of cartoons and exciting, fun things that I used to like and enjoy?

But, of course, as you grow older, the cartoons just seem childish and the comics, well, they don't entertain you anymore and you want to read more grown-up stuff and you take more of an interest in the world and what's happening in it and the things that seemed so boring when it was grown-ups that were doing it.

Now they become more interesting and more part of life because you've grown up, you've moved on. The childish toys no longer entertain the way they once did.

Now, in a spiritual sense, that's what happens to us. The things of the world, the flesh, the childish toys. You know, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13, he says, when I became a man, I put away childish things.

[19:15] We no longer obsess about the things of the world but spiritually, sadly, some people never grow up. Never grow up, never mature and the flesh still dominates and the world still dazzles and the fictional stories are still fascinating and the baby toys are still exciting and they never grow up and they never mature and that's tragic for anyone never to move on to all that life has in its fullness which we have only in Christ.

Yes, we're still in the flesh but these things no longer dominate if we're in Christ. 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.

if the royal standard really flies in my home, if the king lives now in my house, in my heart, my soul, my body, then not only does that mean that anything coming near my home, near my heart gets vetted, gets checked, gets filtered to see whether it's safe or appropriate to come near the sovereign.

Things that once I'd have been fine with and I'd have been okay with it, it's coming near the sovereign, well, it's going to be checked pretty thoroughly to see if it's dangerous or inappropriate or in bad taste or whatever.

So, I begin to check, to decide whether or not it's appropriate for me as someone who has the king dwelling in his home, in his heart, in his soul.

[20 : 58] Things that once used to seem so exciting are now boring. Things that once were dazzled with the life out of me would just seem childish toys now they seem.

Because now, whether it's appropriate or safe or suitable to have a thing in my house, in my home, in my heart, depends on whether or not it's suitable for the king, for his eyes, for his ears, for his presence.

You want to start sifting. You want to start checking. You want to live a life that the king will approve of because you want him to stay. You want him to stay in your heart.

You want that which is appropriate for royal company. But also, if the king lives at my house, under my roof, in my life, then that changes me.

It changes the way I behave. It changes the way I interact with other people. It doesn't make me a snob. It doesn't make me think I'm royal. I know that I'm better than others.

[22 : 02] Of course I'm not. I'm just a commoner, just a sinner with whom the king happens to dwell. But you can't alter the fact that if you've got the king dwelling in your house, everything is different.

The way you interact with other people changes. The way they interact with you changes. Your behaviour subtly begins to change. The way you talk and the things that interest you begin to change because the king's presence changes everything.

Now, people may react positively to the fact you've got the king staying with you now or they may react very negatively. They may be the spiritual equivalent of rabid royalists or hardened republicans.

It doesn't matter. They're always going to react either positively or negatively to the fact that what you've got in your life now if the king is dwelling with you. Once, it was just me in my house, in my heart.

Once, I just did what I wanted. I followed my ideas. I tried to be a good person just like the Galatians. Think they're trying to do their best and do good and hope God will approve of them at the end of the day.

[23 : 08] But if God is actually dwelling with you, if the king is actually present in your life, then it's he who calls the shots. It's he who dictates what you do and how you do it and how the world interacts with you and how you interact with the world because what they'll think about you will be coloured by what they think about the king, Jesus.

And that's the definitive thing in our lives. Once it was just me, once it was just the old self, but the old self is dead for I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me because as he has died for me, now he lives in me.

So I'm quite content to die to the old self. I'm quite content to throw out the old battery that doesn't work anymore. I'm quite content that my house that used to be just me in my heart and just me in my life now has the king dwelling in it.

Because whether we love him or whether we hate him, whether people approve of what dwells in my heart now or whether they don't, the point is that both for them and for me, if I am his, then nothing will ever be the same again.

[24 : 38] 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.