

My Christian Friend

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[0 : 00] Well, this evening, with the Lord's help, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Paul's letter to the Galatians in chapter 2.

Galatians chapter 2, and we'll read the well-known verse of verse 20. Galatians 2 and verse 20. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. My Christian friend, I would like to speak to you this evening about who you are in Christ and what you are in Christ.

And I would like to remind you of your relationship with your Saviour and your responsibility to him. Because being a Christian friend of Jesus, it carries with it not only privilege, but also purpose.

[1 : 17] As a Christian friend of Jesus, you are no longer an unconverted friend of Jesus. You have done and you continue to do as Jesus has commanded.

Because as we saw this morning, in order for Jesus to call us his Christian friend, we must follow his command in John 15, where Jesus said, Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. And as we saw this morning, the command of Jesus is all about following A, B, C.

where Jesus said to the unconverted friend, Abide in me, believe in me, and commit to me. That's what Jesus says to the unconverted friend.

Abide in me, believe in me, and commit to me. And because you followed such a command, you are no longer my unconverted friend. You're my Christian friend.

[2 : 17] Now to explain what I'm talking about for those who weren't here this morning, I mentioned this morning that over the past while I've been reminded that I frequently use the phrase, my unconverted friend.

And I use that phrase to describe someone, maybe many of you, in the congregation who are still not a Christian. And I'm glad this has been highlighted to me that I frequently refer to people who are not Christians as my unconverted friend.

Because, as you know, I don't want anyone to be my unconverted friend. I want everyone to be my Christian friend. And so this morning I spoke to my unconverted friend in the congregation, and we considered Jesus' command in John 15, where Jesus says, Abide in me, believe in me, and commit to me.

And as I said in the morning, this evening, I want us to speak to, I want to speak to my Christian friend. And I'd like to remind my Christian friend of who you are in Christ and what you are in Christ. I want to talk about your relationship and your responsibility to Jesus. Because being a friend of Jesus not only carries with it privilege, but also purpose. But, you know, as I mentioned this morning, the reason for addressing my unconverted friend during the morning service and my Christian friend now during the evening service is because of J.C. Ryle.

[3 : 42] Now, J.C. Ryle, he's had a great influence on my life, but, and he's a favourite commentator of mine. As I've said before, I love his books and I love his writings. I find him so relevant, even though he was a 19th century preacher.

But as a preacher, J.C. Ryle, he knew how hard it was to address everyone in his congregation. Because, as we said this morning, there were those in his congregation who were new to the faith and they needed to grow in their faith.

There were those in his congregation who had been following the Lord for many years and they needed to be challenged and spurred on. There were those in his congregation who were seeking the Lord and they needed direction and encouragement.

And there were others in the congregation who had absolutely no interest in Christianity, but they were just in church out of a sense of duty or even guilt or even just to please someone else. And so when J.C. Ryle, when he began his ministry, he told his congregation that he would preach to them as if they were all Christians during the morning service. And then he would preach to them as if they were all unconverted during the evening service.

[4 : 46] That way, Ryle believed that on the Lord's Day, on one Lord's Day, he could address everyone in his congregation, whether they were a new or experienced Christian or they were seeking the Lord or they were completely uninterested in the gospel.

And you know, as I said this morning, I believe that J.C. Ryle was very wise in his approach because he knew that he could only say so much in one sermon. There's only so much you can say. But in two sermons, over one day, you can try and address everyone sitting under the sound of the gospel.

And as I said this morning, that's what I want to try and do today. So we looked at the unconverted friend this morning. We addressed the unconverted friend in the congregation this morning.

And now, this evening, I want to address my Christian friend. But you know, as I've said before, the Bible is relevant for all of us, whether we're converted or unconverted.

The Bible will still speak to us. So, if you're an unconverted friend here tonight, don't think that this is not for you. The Bible is always for you. The Bible is still speaking to you.

[5 : 56] But you know, as I said this morning, when someone is addressed in these terms as my unconverted friend or my Christian friend, when you're addressed in these terms, you know who you are.

You know where you stand. You know what camp you're in. You know what side of the fence you're on. Because you're either the unconverted friend or the Christian friend. And as I've said, I don't want to be addressing anyone as my unconverted friend.

I want to call everyone my Christian friend. And I want everyone to make the confession of the Christian. Because my Christian friend here tonight, what's your confession of faith?

What's your confession of faith? Well, your confession of faith is to be the same as the Apostle Paul here in verse 20. Where Paul said, I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[7 : 08] What's your confession of faith? Your confession of faith, my Christian friend, is I am crucified, I am connected, I am connected, I am confident.

That's your confession of faith. I am crucified, I am connected, and I am confident. So let's look at our confession of faith. I am crucified. Paul writes, I am crucified with Christ.

I am crucified with Christ. And you know, from the outset of his confession of faith, Paul emphasizes that as a Christian, the cross means everything to him.

Because for Paul, the cross is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. The message of the cross is Christ and him crucified.

That's the message of salvation. And Paul knows that he has peace through the blood of the cross. And that his sins, they were taken away and they were nailed to the cross.

[8 : 11] In fact, Paul believes so much in the centrality of the cross and the beauty of its message that he'll say to us at the end of this letter that he says, God forbid that I should boast in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For it is through him that the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. Paul brings everything back to the cross. Because as a Christian, the cross means everything to him.

Of course, there was a day in Paul's life when the cross meant nothing to Paul. And my Christian friend, there was a day in your life and in my life when the cross meant nothing to us.

The cross just seemed like foolishness. And yet it was through the foolishness of preaching the cross that we came to know the power of God unto salvation.

as Jesus was lifted up before us in the gospel. We came to know, we were drawn to Jesus to confess him as our Lord and Savior.

[9 : 16] But you know, as a first century Christian, Paul, he knew what crucifixion meant. He had seen it. He had seen it in action. He knew that the act of crucifixion was the most barbaric form of capital punishment that the Romans used.

He knew that no one ever survived the crucifixion. Paul knew that the crucifixion had symbolized the curse of sin upon all mankind. Because the law of God said, as we were reading there in Galatians 3, Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree.

And yet for Paul, looking at a crucified Christ was the greatest blessing. That's where his hope was. That's where his salvation was. Because in the cross of Jesus Christ, he says, we're no longer in bondage to sin.

We're no longer under the power of the law. This law that condemns us. We're no longer cursed by the law. No, because as we read in chapter 3, Paul says, we're no longer cursed by the law because Christ redeemed us on the cross from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. As it is written, he says, Cursed is everyone. Who hangs upon a tree. My Christian friend, the cross of Jesus Christ gives to us the greatest freedom.

[10:39] Because it was upon the cross that Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, he became sin for us. He became the curse for us.

Why? So that we would be made the righteousness of God in him. It was Calvary's great transaction where the worst about me was laid upon him and the best about him was laid upon me. My sins transferred to Christ. Christ's righteousness transferred to me. This is what Paul says to the Corinthians. Even though he was rich, yet for our sakes.

For our sakes he became poor. That we, through his poverty, might become rich. You know, for Paul, the cross meant everything.

The cross meant everything for Paul as a Christian. So much so that he refused to boast in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, my Christian friend, that ought to be our boast.

[11:45] To boast in nothing else. Nothing else except the cross of Christ. But you know, when we consider what Paul is actually confessing here, he doesn't just speak about the cross from the perspective of Christ dying on the cross.

Paul speaks about the cross from the perspective of Paul dying with Christ. He says, I am crucified with Christ.

I am crucified with him. And you know, that's the call to become a Christian, isn't it? That was the call that was issued by Jesus to the disciples and to everyone who was following him.

Jesus said, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. The call to become a Christian is the call to live a crucified life.

It's the call to be crucified. Because being crucified with Christ, it's all about surrender. it's all about submission. As we saw this morning, it's all about commitment.

[12:53] Being crucified with Christ is all about surrendering your will, your heart, your mind, your body, your desires, even your time. It's all about surrendering all of it to Jesus Christ, where he is Lord.

Lord over your life. My friend, the call to become a Christian is all about dying with Christ. It's about dying to sin and dying to self.

Dying to sin and dying to self. That was A.W. Tozer. He was an American theologian and writer during the 19th century. And he wrote a book based upon this verse called The Crucified Life.

And it's a brilliant book. I've read it before and I'd highly recommend it to you. Because throughout the book Tozer is dealing with the question, what does it mean to live the crucified life?

And just in the introduction of the book Tozer gives his explanation as to why he's written the book and what the title is, what the title means. And he says, what I mean by the title The Crucified Life.

[14:04] He says, it's a life wholly given over to the Lord in absolute humility and obedience. The crucified life, he says, is a life which is committed to following after Jesus Christ, to be more like him, to think like him, to act like him, and to love like him.

Tozer says, that's what it means to live the crucified life. That's what it means to be a Christian. And my Christian friend, that ought to be our confession. I am crucified with Christ.

my old self, the old man in me, where I enjoyed sin and I boasted in self and I served my own ends and I gloried in the pleasures of the world.

That old man in me is dead. And now, as a Christian, my confession is, God forbid that I should boast in anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For it's through him that the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. My Christian friend, the life of a Christian is a crucified life.

[15 : 13] And the confession of a Christian is, I have been crucified with Christ. I have been crucified with Christ. And so, my Christian friend, your confession of faith is, I am crucified.

I am crucified. Then secondly, I am connected. I am connected. Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ, it's Christ who lives in me. Now, this second statement from Paul's confession of faith, it draws our attention to the theme of union with Christ.

And union with Christ it's what underlies every aspect of our salvation. This mystical union, this mystical, you could say, it's a marriage union that exists between Jesus Christ and you, the Christian.

And in that connection, that union, Christ provides for the Christian every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. The union with Christ is like the fountainhead.

[16 : 26] and from that fountainhead flows all the blessings. The Christian's every spiritual blessing, whether it's repentance and faith, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification.

It's all encapsulated. It's all bound up with the Christian's union with Christ. And you know, Paul, he loves this concept of union with Christ. In every letter, he's talking about it and he's writing about it and he's emphasizing how precious our salvation is because of our connection, our union with Christ.

Every spiritual blessing, he says, it flows to us from heavenly places. It's all because we're in Christ. We're in union with Christ. And for Paul, these are key phrases that we're in Christ or we are with Christ.

We're in Christ or we're with Christ. And they all refer to our union, our union with Christ. And that's what Paul is emphasizing here in his confession of faith.

He's saying, I am connected. I'm not only crucified, I am connected. And because I'm connected, he says, I have been crucified with Christ. And then he says, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

[17 : 49] And there's the union. He says, he's with Christ and he's in Christ. That's the union. Paul is showing us that the blessings which flow to us, they flow from our union with Christ.

They all come to us from our union with Christ in his death and our union with Christ in his resurrection. Paul says, I have been crucified with Christ.

I died with Christ. I died to sin with Christ. The old man that was in me has been crucified. He's dead and buried.

Therefore, says Paul, it is no longer I who live. It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.

Although I was crucified, dead and buried with Christ, I have been made alive again.

I've been regenerated. But I haven't been made alive in and of myself. It's Christ who lives in me.

And my Christian friend, that's your confession tonight.

[18 : 52] As someone who is in union with Christ, your confession is when you look at the cross, your confession is when Christ was crucified, I was crucified with him.

When Christ died, I died. When Christ was buried, I was buried. When Christ was resurrected, I was raised with him to the newness of life. I was raised with him where Christ now dwells in me by his Holy Spirit.

Christ lives in me. Now that's a thought. And you know, Paul, he put it so beautifully when he wrote his letter to the Corinthians.

He said, if anyone, if anyone, that includes the unconverted friend, if anyone, if anyone is in Christ, if anyone is in union with Christ, if anyone is connected to Christ, he or she, he says, is a new creation.

They're brand new. The old things, they've passed away. It's all become new. If anyone, that's how he opens it out. He opens it out to the unconverted and he's asking, are you in Christ?

[20 : 07] If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. And you know, it's a beautiful image because it's the image of new life through the power of the resurrection. My Christian friend, the confession of the Christian is that we have received all the blessings of salvation.

Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, we have received it all through our union with Christ in his death on the cross and our union with Christ as he came out of the grave through his resurrection.

We've received all these blessings. Regeneration, effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance. They're all there for us.

It's all there for us. All these blessings and even the promised glorification in the end. And because of our union with Christ, there's new life.

There's a new beginning. Paul says, it's no longer I who live. It's not me. Christ lives in me. Christ lives in me.

[21 : 15] And it's such a beautiful statement because it not only draws our attention to the closeness of our union with Christ, it also shows us that when Christ lives in me, I'm a new person with new desires that weren't there before.

When Christ lives in me, there's a desire now to read the Bible that wasn't there before. I want to read my Bible now. I want to understand what God is saying to me. When Christ lives in me, there's this desire to pray and to ask the Lord for help and to speak to Him in every situation in life.

When Christ lives in me, there's a desire to be in church, to hear the preaching of God's Word. That desire, it wasn't there before. When Christ lives in me, there's a desire for the things of Christ, which wasn't there before.

There's a love for other Christians and a desire to be among them and to worship with them. All these things, they weren't there before. And maybe for you, my unconverted friend, maybe you are in union with Christ.

Maybe Christ does live in you. You just don't realize it yet. But you know, if you have all these desires, the desire to read the Bible, to pray, to be in church, to be under the Word, to be with the Lord's people, do you not ever wonder where all these desires came from?

[22 : 45] Where would your interests in church and the Bible and preaching and a love for Christians, where would all that come from if Christ didn't live in you? Surely you can see that there must be this change in your life where you're being drawn, drawn to Jesus, wanting to know more about Him.

But you know, what I love about union with Christ and this connection to Christ is that every Christian can say, because He lives in me, He's always with me.

Because He lives in me, He's always with me. And this is the wonder of it. He's with me everywhere I go. He's with me when I go to work. He's with me when I go to the school.

He's with me when I go shopping. He's with me when I'm at home. He's with me when I'm in the car. That's what we're singing about in Psalm 139. He's everywhere. He's searched us and known us. He's acquainted with all our ways. But not only that, because He lives in me, He's with me when I face opposition for my faith. He's with me when I go through illness.

[23 : 55] He's with me when I experience sorrow and loss and sadness and grief. He's with me when I'm confronted with things that seem to be too much for me to cope with or understand.

And He's with me because He lives in me. And you know, the promise that's given to us in Hebrews, it's true. It's true.

There's a promise in Hebrews where Jesus says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. And my Christian friend, Jesus will never leave you or forsake you.

Why? Because He lives in you. He cannot depart from you. He's in union with you, married to you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. He won't leave you because He lives in you. And you know, is that what the hymn writer says? Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

[24 : 55] Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future and life is worth the living just because He lives. And my Christian friend, life is worth the living because you can say, it is no longer I who live.

But Christ lives in me. Christ lives in me. And so my Christian friend, what's your confession of faith?

Your confession of faith is, I am crucified. I am connected. And lastly, I am confident. I am confident.

Let's read Paul's confession again. Or the Christian's confession. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And so in the last section of this verse, Paul indicates to us where his confidence comes from as a Christian. But what Paul is wanting to make perfectly clear is that his confidence as a Christian, it doesn't come from self.

[26 : 09] It's not self-confidence. It's not self-assurance. It's not self-righteousness. Yes, there was a day when Paul was self-confident and he was self-righteous and he was self-assured.

But as Paul later confessed, what things were gained to me, those I now count as loss for Christ. Paul came to discover that his confidence is in no other except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And you know what Paul is saying here to the Galatians, it was particularly relevant to them because as I mentioned earlier, the Galatian churches, like many of the other churches in the New Testament, they were being heavily influenced by false teaching. And these false teachers, they were telling the Galatians that they needed something more than Jesus. They needed that Jesus plus. They needed Jesus plus knowledge. Jesus plus their good works. Jesus plus their law keeping. Jesus plus circumcision. And this message of Jesus plus, it left all the Galatians feeling inferior and inadequate, that they're not good enough.

[27 : 19] They're not good enough to be saved. They kept thinking they lack something in their Christianity. They're not reaching the standard that's being set. And the result was that the Galatians, they doubted their salvation.

They questioned whether or not they were genuine Christians at all. And they lacked confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ. To the point that the Galatians started to believe that salvation actually was Jesus plus.

And you know what Paul says to them? He says to them in chapter 3 at verse 1, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Who has led you astray to believing such a lie?

A lie that your salvation is Jesus plus. And throughout the letter to the Galatians and in his confession of faith, Paul says that our confidence as Christians, it's grounded entirely upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Our confidence, it isn't in our ability to keep God's law. Our confidence isn't in our works of righteousness. Our confidence isn't even in being a good person.

[28 : 36] No, Paul says that the confession of the Christian is, I have died to self. I've been crucified with Christ. I've been resurrected with Christ.

It's no longer I who live. Christ now lives in me. And because he lives in me, he's changed me. He's transformed me. He's made me a new creature. He's given me a new beginning with new desires. And the life that I now live in the flesh, says Paul, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. My Christian friend, our confidence is in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. No one else and nothing else. No pluses. Jesus Christ alone. And you know, our confession, I always go back to these words, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

[29 : 49] And you know, you wish the Galatians had heard that. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. My Christian friend, this is your confession as a Christian.

Your union with Christ has given you a new identity in Christ. It's no longer in self because you've died to self. You've crucified the old self with Christ.

You went to the cross with Christ. You were buried with Christ. You came out of the tomb with Christ. You've been raised to the newness of life with Christ.

And now your identity, it's hidden in Christ. You're one of the Lord's people. You're a Christian. You're a Christian.

And of course, being a Christian doesn't mean you're perfect. Certainly not. And even Paul knew that. He confessed to the churches in Rome, the good that I would, I do not.

[30 : 55] But the evil that I would not, that is what I do. Paul is saying, I want to do good things, but I keep doing the things I don't want to do. Christians aren't perfect.

They're not the finished article. The work has begun. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus. The promise is, he who has begun the good work in you will bring it on to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

John Newton, a man I'd love to have met. He not only wrote Amazing Grace, but he also said, I'm not what I ought to be.

I'm not what I want to be. I'm not what I hope to be in another world. But still, I'm not what I once used to be. And by the grace of God, I am what I am.

And what John Newton could say, what the Apostle Paul could say, what you, my Christian friend, can say tonight is, I am crucified with Christ. I was crucified with him.

[31 : 58] I died with him. I was buried with him. I was raised with him to the newness of life. And your confession is, the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

the life that I now live day by day, I live by faith. And by faith, every day, I know that that the Lord has appointed these things for me.

By faith, I know that every moment is a blessing from the hand of Jesus. By faith, I know that every providence that comes into my path, whether it's a joy or a sorrow, I know that it's been put there by the one who loved me and gave himself for me.

And it's for that reason, my Christian friend, that you can say, I look to Jesus and I live for Jesus. Why? Because he is the author and the finisher of my faith.

He's the author. He begun the work and he will finish it. He will bring it on to completion. My Christian friend, what's your confession?

[33 : 08] What's your confession? Your confession as a Christian is, I am crucified. I am connected.

I am confident. It's a wonderful confession. My unconverted friend, what's your confession?

What's your confession? Can you say, I am crucified. I am connected.

I am confident. This is the confession of the Christian. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

[34 : 09] Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, may we give thanks for the wonder of salvation that we are those who are enabled to be united to Jesus Christ, belonging to a Saviour, a Saviour who loved us, and gave himself for us.

We marvel, Lord, at the wonder of what the cross has achieved. That through the cross we have been cleansed. We have been made new. We have been given a new heart, a new beginning. We have been made righteous. We are being made holy. We have been adopted in the Beloved. We are being kept until the day of Christ Jesus. And even when we die, we will be glorified.

Lord, we thank Thee for the promise that the Gospel gives to us. Help us to live it out. Help us to live day by day, saying as Paul could say, the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

O Lord, enable us to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus, to know him and to love him day by day as the author and the finisher of our faith.

[35 : 29] Keep us then, we pray. Keep us in the week that lies ahead, a week that is unknown to us, as every week is. But help us to trust in Thee, the one who has searched us and knows us, who is acquainted with all our ways.

Bless us together then, we pray. Go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 62.

Psalm 62 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 62, it's on page 294.

We're singing from verse 5 down to the verse 8. And I know we sang these words on Wednesday night, but I make no apology for that.

These words are wonderful. This is our confession as Christians. As it says in verse 5, this was David's testimony. Psalm 62.

[36 : 40] David is saying, my soul, my soul, wait thou with patience upon my God alone. On Him dependeth all my hope and expectation. He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is He.

He only is my sure defense. I shall not moved be. In God, my glory placed is, and my salvation sure. In God, the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure.

And notice then in verse 8, David speaks to the unconverted friend. You people, place your confidence in Him continually.

Before Him, pour ye out your heart. God is our refuge high. So Psalm 62 from verse 5 down to the verse marked 8 to God's praise.

Psalm 62 My soul, which thou with patience upon thy God alone, on Him dependeth and my hope and expectation.

[38 : 02] He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is He.

He only is my sure defense. I shall not murder be.
In God, my glory glistens, and my salvation sure.
In God, the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure.
Keep me perplexed confidence in Him continually.
[39 : 33] Be for Him, put me at your heart.

God is the refuge high. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.
Amen.