

Guest Preacher - Rev. Dr. Malcolm Maclean

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Preacher: Rev. Malcolm Maclean

[0 : 00] I would like us to think together about verse 20 of the chapter we read. Galatians 2 and verse 20.

! Especially the second part of the verse, but we'll read the entire verse.! 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. 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.

There is a certain sense in which we should be thankful that there were troubles in churches. Especially in the churches of the first century. Because humanly speaking, if there had not been troubles, we would not have half the New Testament.

Because most of Paul's letters were written to churches with troubles. The first letter that he wrote was a letter to the Galatians.

[1 : 47] And the only reason he wrote it is because there were troubles among the churches of Galatia. Paul had gone to Galatia, which is in modern-day Turkey, as part of what we call his first missionary journey.

And we can read about that in the book of Acts. And we read about it in the book of Acts. It's an astonishing journey. Because it's the first time the gospel was taken into the Gentile world.

And to places where no one had even heard of the living God. Paul and Barnabas, they go there and spend a few days or a few weeks in all these different locations.

And churches begin. It's astonishing. In communities where no one had ever heard of the gospel. Within a couple of days or a couple of weeks, churches had sprung up. And that tells us, of course, about the amazing power of God. Some of these new churches, well, they had Jews in them.

[3 : 13] And, of course, the Jews had their own background. And their own customs. What they were used to.

And many of those customs and practices had come from the Old Testament. But there were also Gentiles in the church.

In these new churches. And these Gentiles, well, they had a totally different kind of background. They had come out of paganism. And there was an obvious question facing both of them.

Both those who had been Jews. And those who had been Gentiles. And what was the question? Well, the question was, how do they live the Christian life?

The Jews had their background. The Gentiles had their background. But now they were called to live an entirely new kind of life.

[4 : 28] And Paul mentions that at the start of the verse we re-read. Verse 20. He says, it's no longer I who live. But Christ who lives in me.

But when he says, Christ who lives in me. He refers to the Holy Spirit. Who the moment someone believes in Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to live in them.

Comes to live in their hearts. And in their minds. But the Holy Spirit could come into their lives in different ways. He could have done. But he comes into their life as the Spirit of Jesus.

And it means that each one of them. Although they lived in Galatia. Each one of them.

Not only had Jesus living beside them. But Jesus living in them. Which is extraordinary when you think about it.

[5 : 27] That Jesus. Who had been here on earth. And lived that perfect life. And died on the cross.

Rose from the dead. Ascended to heaven. Yet there he was. With all his people. Through the Holy Spirit who dwelt in them.

Amen. Connected to that of course. Another question. What does Jesus want his people to do. As he lives in them. The church is in Galatia.

Well after Paul and Barnabas had gone back to Antioch. They were visited by. Other. Speakers. [6 : 33] Other. Teachers. False apostles they're called. But they had a suggestion. As to how people should live the Christian life.

They had come from. Jerusalem. And they were quite prepared. To accept all the things. That I have just said. About Jesus. They believed.

That he had lived. And died. And risen. And ascended. To heaven. They believed. That he had sent the Holy Spirit. Into the world. But they believed.

Something else. That he knew. It would sound quite simple, because these false teachers would just look up Leviticus or one of the other books of Moses and say to their listeners, look, it says there, you should do this and you should do that and you should do the next thing.

And not surprisingly, these new converts listened to these false teachers. And were immediately led astray.

[8 : 28] They were led astray by people quoting Old Testament verses. The outcome was, of course, there had to be a big meeting in Jerusalem, the first church council as it's called, to discuss the matter, because that step that had been taken in Galatia threatened the entire church.

We may say, what's that got to do with us? That problem was sorted out long ago at the Council of Jerusalem, and Paul wrote this letter to explain it to the churches in Galatia.

Well, the particular practice may no longer be a problem. But the principle behind the practice is a constant problem.

Because the principle behind the practice is Jesus plus something.

It's not enough to have Jesus, this principle says. You've got to have Jesus plus this, or Jesus plus that, in order to live the Christian life.

[10 : 06] And that's not what Paul says in verse 20. Paul says in verse 20, that is enough to have Christ.

In fact, he says to us, we dare not add to Christ. Jesus alone.

But how do we work that out? So I just want us to think about that briefly today. Because it is a frequent tactic of the devil to get us to add something to Christ.

It can be anything. It can be tradition. It can be my experience. It can be somebody else's experience.

Whatever it is. So Paul in this verse tells us. He tells us, first of all, who Jesus is.

[11 : 32] He could say a lot about that, of course. But he just mentions three things about Jesus. And these three things tell us why he is enough.

And then he talks about his method of living the Christian life. There's the mystery of Jesus.

Who is he? What are his attitude? What are his actions? What are his actions?

As I said, Paul says three things about Jesus. We'll just run through them very quickly. But the first thing he says there about Jesus in verse 20, where he says, he lives by faith in the Son of God.

Well, sometimes we can start at the bottom and work up to the top. When we're talking about something.

[12 : 50] At other times, we can start at the top and then start working the other way. And when Paul refers to Jesus here, he starts right at the heights.

The Son of God. One of the ever-blessed Trinity. Equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. As the Son of God, he possesses constantly all the attributes of God.

And he doesn't just exercise them in turn. As if at one particular time, he exercises his power. And then later on, he exercises wisdom or something like that.

But all his powers work together. All his attributes work together fully and completely. He's an astonishing person. Far higher than we can comprehend.

What were his attitudes? What were his actions? Well, one action we can think about is his creation.

[14 : 11] Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus as the Son of God. Spoke the universe into being.

What does that tell us about his power? When you think about it. It actually hides his power.

We may initially say, well, this reveals his power. And of course, to a certain extent, it does.

But the astonishing thing about Jesus as the Son of God is that he could have made a thousand universes. A billion universes. Simultaneously.

So when he made one of them. There is a certain sense in which he was actually hiding the fullness of his power.

[15:19] Because he could have made limitless universes. And the same could be said about all his attributes. The whole of creation put together has never seen the full range of any of his attributes.

He is an astonishing person. Far greater than anyone we can possibly imagine. And since that is the case.

What is the point of adding anything to him? Since he is omniscient. What is the point of adding anything to him?

If Christ is with me. Who is with me?

The great God of eternity. How amazing is God's plan. That he.

[16:32] He himself. Comes to be with us. Second thing that Paul mentions about Jesus in this verse.

Is that the Son of God. Loved me. He doesn't say the. Son of God.

Loves me. Why does he use. Another tense. It's not exactly a past tense.

That he uses. The tense he uses. Is more a tense. That indicates completeness. And Paul uses it. I think. To say that the Son of God. Always loved him. Which of course tells us that.

[17:40] There never was a time. When the Son of God. Did not love him. How old is God?

God. How old is the love of God? How old is the love of God?

The love of God. Has had no beginning. How long has Jesus loved me? Every Christian cannot. In this verse. Of course. The love is put before his giving. He loved me. And gave himself for me. We'll think about the giving in a minute.

But how long has Jesus loved me? He's always loved me. He.

[18:52] As. The infinite God. Infinite. Eternal. And unchangeable. Throughout the.

Beginningless. Beginningless. Ages. Of eternity. He loved us. Extraordinary.

In fact. We can say. Throughout his entire. Existence. He loved us. We run out of words.

To try to explain. The unexplainable. But Paul. Gets great comfort from this.

And so should we. Why does he love us? If we are his people.

[19:57] He loves us. Because. In a. In a. Incredible mystery. The heavenly father.

Gave us. To his son. We can't fix a date. Because. Because it's an eternal present.

But the. Son. Jesus. He. Eternally. Enjoyed. The reception. Of this. Gift. From his father. A gift.

Of sinners. Like us. And since that was his attitude. And remember that his love. Is connected to all his other attributes.

Why would we want to add anything to him? He alone is sufficient. The son of God.

[21:11] Loved me. For an amazing thing. For a Christian to say. But it's true. And since that is the case.

Why add anything to him? And then Paul says.

The son of God. Gave himself. How did he do that? It's the same tense.

As it's used. By Paul there. When he describes the love. He gave himself. Completely. In what ways.

Did he give himself? He gave himself. For becoming a man. He became. A real man. He agreed to it.

[22:24] It had always been his plan. That the time would come. When he. The eternal God.

Would become. A real man. Without ceasing. To be God. And.

Having become. A real man. Ever after. He is God. He is God and man.

But he gave himself to it. He united. His human nature. To his divine person.

Fully. And he did it. For us. And then he gave himself.

[23:32] By living that wonderful life. On earth. A sinless life. That's true. A perfect life.

A constantly. Appropriate. Life. You know.

Jesus never once. Gave a wrong. Kind of look. He never once. Made an.

Insincere. Sigh. He constantly. Did what was right. Totally right.

At every moment. He never used. An. Unnecessary. Adjective. He spoke the truth.

[24:34] At every moment. His heart. Was full of love. When he saw sinners.

He cared. There's many ways. His life. Can be looked at. But what is true. Of every second.

Of his life. Is that he. Gave himself. Is that he? Is that he? Is that he? Is that he? And since he's the same.

Yesterday. Today. And forever. Why do we need. To add anything. To him? And of course.

He gave himself. On the cross. Voluntarily. Fully. Perfectly.

[25 : 36] Completely. Successfully. He went there.

With a purpose. He went there. Because he loved the father. He went there. Because he loved sinners.

He went to that. Uncharted. Country. You can't go down.

To a shop. And buy a map. That tells you. The details. Of what it's like.

To live in the territory. Where God is angry. What maps did Jesus have.

[26 : 39] When on the cross. He went to where no one had been before. His physical sufferings.

Sadly.

Many had felt similar things. Because crucifixion. Because crucifixion was common. But the sufferings of his soul.

As he was led. Into a wilderness. For the powers of darkness. For the powers of darkness.

Attacked him. And where his father. Withdrew his presence. Who can say.

What it was like. He himself. Tells us. And he always spoke the truth.

[27 : 40] And on the cross. He spoke the truth. And on the cross. He said he was forsaken. He wasn't.

Exaggerating. But why? He gave himself.

For me. Says Paul. And since he went. That far. Is he going to leave us now?

Of course not. Then why do we need. To add anything to him? Christ alone.

That's a bit about his person. A couple of things. About Paul's method.

[28 : 55] How does he. Say we should. Live. Live for Jesus. Live with Jesus.

How do we do it? Because he does say. He does it. The life. I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith. In the son of God. He's talking about faith. What is.

Faith in the son of God. Faith in the son of God. Who. Loved me. And gave himself for me.

Well surely. Faith is dependence. Is that not how the Christian life starts? We all have our different stories.

[30 : 01] We all have our different stories. About how we came to the moment. And whether or not we can tell the exact moment. Doesn't really matter. What matters is that the journey began.

When Jesus and us. Jesus and I. Started the road together. And whatever there were.

Circumstances surrounding. The occasion. What actually matters is. That we started. Depending on Christ. And that in a real sense.

Is what faith is. We depend upon him. We depend upon him. For the salvation of our souls.

And we should depend upon him. For the strength. For every step. That we will take. In our walk through this world. And the astonishing thing is.

[31 : 17] He's available. He's with us. Who's there to help us.

When temptation comes. He is. Who's there to guide our minds.

When we've got a choice to make. He is. We don't just depend on him.

We don't just depend on him. For the big thing. We don't just depend upon him. To get us to heaven. We depend upon him.

To take us through life on earth. Seven days a week.

[32 : 15] All day long. It's not escapism. It's ultimate realism.

But this dependent faith. In this world.

It's never. Done. By a perfect. Follower. There's never been a.

Expression. Of perfect faith. Ever made. By any disciple. Not even the apostle Paul. Every expression.

He made. Of his faith. In Jesus. On his earthly journey. He was a sinner's faith. Indeed.

[33 : 17] When he comes towards. The end of his life. He describes himself. As the chief of sinners. But the faith we have.

As we take each step. On the Christian pathway. The faith is accompanied. By repentance. A Christian wishes.

He had a better prayer life. A Christian wishes. He had. Stronger affection. A Christian wishes.

He had more intense devotion. A Christian wishes. And he. Takes these.
 Flaws. And he takes them. To the savior. Who is with him. The savior. Who is. At the same time.
 [34 : 23] On high. Exalted. To give mercy. And it's one of the most. Wonderful things.
 Of the Christian life. To confess. Your sins. And to admit. To Jesus.
 That we have failed. And to ask him. For forgiveness. And the same Christ.
 Who forgave us. On day one. Forgives us. Every day. And it's going to be like that.
 Every day. Five minutes. Before you leave this world. You're going to be a penitent sinner.
 [35 : 22] And that's normal. It's not a failure. To engage in repentance. It's an acknowledgement of
 failure.
 Failure. But the act of repentance itself. Is not a failure. It is normal. It's good to repent.
 There is a certain sense. In which it is pleasant. To repent. Because where else. Can we go. With a
 guilty conscience.
 What set of man-made solutions. Can deal with the thoughts. We have about our sins. But Jesus
 can't.
 In the future. That the good shepherd takes to the heavenly fold.
 [36 : 52] It's a sheep that limps the entire journey. But the shepherd is there.
 He's a unique shepherd. Because he's with all his flock. Simultaneously. Simultaneously. He's with
 his sheep in Iran this morning.
 He's with his sheep in Israel this morning. He's with his sheep wherever they are. Whatever
 condition they're in.
 And they can be devoted to him. And therefore they say to all alternative suggestions. No matter
 how appealing the pluses might seem.
 They say to all of them. Christ alone is sufficient. Where do we stand?
 [38 : 11] Do we want Christ alone? Or do we think there's something we're missing? If we stick to
 Christ alone.
 Jesus is all we need. Hope each one of us. Trusts in the son of God. Who loved his people.
 And gave himself for them. And goes with them. As he takes them to his heavenly home. And who
 will be with them.
 And who will be with them. For the eternity to come. Shall we pray? Lord we give you thanks.
 For Paul's devotion. That led him to write all these letters. But we know that his devotion.
 [39 : 18] Was connected to the fact. He was totally Christ center. And that you made him. The man
 that he was. Help us to do what he himself said.
 That we should follow him. Even as he followed Christ. And help us to have Christ as a center. And
 the circumference.
 Of our lives. Help us to be. Jesus. People. Not Jesus plus.
 Something. Granted we pray. For your own name's sake. Amen. Amen. We'll sing from.
 Psalm 119. In the Scottish Psalter. We'll sing verses 57 to 60. Thou my sure portion art alone.
 [40 : 27] Which I did choose O Lord. O Lord. I have resolved and said. That I would keep thy holy
 word. We can sing verses 57 to 60.
 The mighty portion art alone.
 Which I did choose O Lord. I have resolved and said. I have resolved and said.
 That I would keep thy holy word.
 With my whole heart. I did entreat.
 [41 : 30] Thy face unfavour free. According to thy gracious word.
 Be merciful to me. I thought upon my former ways.
 And did my life well try. And to thy testimonies pure.
 My feet then turned and die. I did not stay.
 Nor linger long. As those that slothful are.
 [42 : 59] But hastily. Thy laws to keep. Myself I did prepare.
 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God the Father. And the communion of the Holy
 Spirit.
 Be with us all. Amen.