

I Must Die to Live?

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.

Galatians 2:20

Salvation comes by believing, but not just believing that Jesus existed. Salvation comes by believing that Jesus is the Son of God and His death paid the price for your sins. James 2:19 tells us that just believing that Jesus existed is not enough.

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

A belief that results in salvation is a belief that God Himself inspires in people, a belief not just that Jesus existed, but belief that Jesus accomplished forgiveness for me. Believing this first means that all must accept that they cannot accomplish their own forgiveness, that they are lost. You cannot be found unless you are lost, and likewise, you cannot be saved until you believe that you are spiritually lost.

The parable of the wayward son in Luke 15 demonstrates to us the type of heart necessary to see Jesus for who He is. In this parable a rich man had two sons. One of them demanded his inheritance early, left his father, and lived a life of partying and fun. He spent all of his money in a foreign country on sin and friends, and when he discovered he had nothing, he found himself eating the slop that they fed pigs just to survive. His moment of awakening comes in verse 17 through 19.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’”

The son realized that his life was sinful, that he did not deserve anything but judgment from the father, and that his own ways were leading him to destruction. The son realized that the only way he had to approach the father was through humility, asking for the father's mercy. The son did not try to make a case for himself, to tell the father all of the good that he did in the foreign country. The son admitted his sin and asked for forgiveness. The son had a changing heart.

In the same way, when a sinner comes to Christ and believes, their heart goes through a transformation. The old life of sin and pride must be put off. The old life of living for oneself and trying to accomplish God's good grace is forever given up. The sinner must die to that old life, and enter into a new life with Christ.

Galatians 2:20 tells us that we are crucified with Christ!

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 essence of this message is that a belief that leads to salvation is a belief that gives up on other methods of pleasing God or pleasing ourselves. God does not expect us to do good works to “earn” our forgiveness. God expects us to die to our sinful lives and He raises us up with Christ, creating a new heart and a new life for us to live. This means that our old lives of struggling to please ourselves or God is dead, and a new person who leans on Christ to please God and others is created. This is an amazing thing that we cannot fully explain, but we know that Christ makes us a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*”

This reflects the new person that a Christian becomes when they believe in Jesus. Belief in Jesus changes the lives of people. This transformational belief in Jesus is the new birth that Jesus tells Nicodemus of in John 3. He is obviously not telling Nicodemus to believe that Jesus is a real person – Jesus was sitting right in front of him. He was telling Nicodemus something more – to believe in Jesus meant to have a changed life – to be born again. To believe in Jesus meant to give up on your methods of trying to please God through good deeds and rituals, and come to Jesus for forgiveness. To believe in Jesus means to come to God like the wayward son in Luke – recognizing that all of our good deeds will not make up for our sin. Isaiah 64:6 tells us “*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*”

All of our righteousness is like a polluted garment – a filthy rag. Coming to Jesus admits that and clings to Jesus to save us from our sins. This is the essence of being crucified with Christ – our old self dying to ourselves and a new person being born again in Christ.

The life that I now live I live by faith – that Jesus loves me and that His death paid the price for my sin. Jesus died for my sin, and because of that I am now forgiven before God. My old sinful self is dead, and my new life in Christ is a life of faith. I still sin, but I know that my sin is forgiven and my standing before God is assured. This is the gospel message, and it is the power of God for Salvation.



For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

English Standard Version (ESV)

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