

Dying With Christ - A New Years Message

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

I was sharing earlier that there are all kinds of New Year's resolutions that people will lay out this time of year. But there's a New Year's resolution that I think that it would be good for us to all have. And it's found, I'd like you to go ahead and just turn in your Bible to Galatians chapter 2. Galatians chapter 2. We'll get into Mark, by the way, next week.

Galatians chapter 2. Paul made a statement in the Book of Galatians that continues to be for me a focal point of my heart in my walk with the Lord, because I realize how far I am from really walking out the reality of it.

And it's found in verse 20. Some of you probably guessed that's where I was going to be reading, and it goes like this. *"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 (in other words, in this body) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (ESV)

And that is probably one of the most powerful verses in all of the Bible, because it speaks of something that you and I cannot do on our own, and that is crucify our flesh.

We all, I think know and understand how powerful our flesh is. Or should I say weak? It just depends on what it's going for, doesn't it? It's weak when we're trying to do those things which are of God, and it's powerful when we're leaning toward those things that are in keeping with the flesh.

You'll remember that when Jesus told His disciples to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, He chastised them for their inability to stay awake and pray. But He said to them, *"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* (Matthew 26:41) So it's weak when it comes to doing those things which God has called upon our lives to do.

But boy, I tell you, when I want to go my own way, my flesh is not weak. My flesh is very strong. And it, it can easily set the course of my life. And before Christ it does, doesn't it? Before Jesus, our flesh does set the course.

I don't know about you, but before I met Jesus, before I met my new Lord, I'll tell you who was Lord of my life. Me! I was in charge. I set my course. I did what I wanted. And I did what pleased me.

And if that meant going over the top of some other people, then so be it. It's like, I lived by that worldly adage, look out for number one. That's the way I lived, and I bet you did too.

And that is the way the world lives. Hey, you got to please yourself. You got to love yourself. They say stupid things like, you really can't love others until you learn to love yourself. That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life, but it's a saying of the world, which even a lot of Christians have frankly bought into. Sorry if I offended you, but. It's just one of those things which focuses attention on me, because where me is in charge, where self is in charge.

Now I've come to Jesus, you've come to Christ and you've invited Him to be Lord of your life, right? And suddenly now a completely different dynamic has taken place in our lives. And it, and that dynamic is one of Jesus being the focal point of why I live and what I do.

But you see, it's one thing to say, I want to make Jesus Lord. If I asked you today, how many of you want to make Jesus Lord? I dare say I'd get a pretty good showing of hands. How many of you? Don't do it, but if I said, how many of you want to make Jesus really Lord of your life? More so in 2017 than ever before? Yeah! Little locker room thing going on here

But you know what we forget? We forget that while we want to do that positive thing of making Jesus of Lord, there's a negative thing that has to go on in equal fashion, and that is I have to dethrone self. If I am going to enthrone Jesus, I have to be dethroned, right?

I have to take myself off that throne. I have to say, Paul, you will not rule and reign in this situation and even in this life. And that's what Paul was talking about here in Galatians chapter 2 when he said, I've been crucified with Christ.

Because you see, even though just a moment ago we celebrated and we remembered what Jesus did for us on the cross in His crucifixion, Paul takes that idea of dying one step further. And he says, not only did Jesus die on the cross, but when you come to Him by faith, you die too.

It's a death to the old life, a death to the old self nature, the old ruler of your life that says, I'm doing it my way. Like the world does. It's my body. I can do what

I want with it, right? I'm not going to ask you how many of you said that before you knew Christ. My body, do what I want. It's my life. I can do what I want with it, right?

As a Christian, we come to terms with the fact over time that Jesus purchased us. And the Bible says now we belong to Him. You have been purchased from death to life.

The Bible says you are not your own, you've been bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) And that price was the precious blood of Jesus Christ that see, as Christians, that's our life. Your life is not your own. It's not yours to live any way you want.

If that's the way you want to live, then you're not going to be comfortable and you're not going to be fulfilled hanging out with Christians because Christians are moving toward that goal of making Jesus more Lord every day. And if that's simply unpalatable to you, then you probably just need to go back and live in the world, and stop playing games.

Our goal as believers is to put ourselves increasingly more on the altar because that's our form of worship. Paul wrote to the Romans and he said, In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices. And then he told us it's holy and pleasing to God and is in fact your spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1)

What is worship? To give myself to Him and say, Lord, I give you control of my life. I lay my life at Your feet. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in this body, I live by faith.

I used to live it a different way and I still occasionally go back and live it that way, which is a self-centered form of self-gratification. That's the way I used to live the life in this body. And again, I am tempted constantly to go back and do it that way.

Sometimes I even fall and I do go back and live it that way. But God convicts me and we have this little talk He and I, and He goes, son, that wasn't good. Was it? And I go, yeah, no, no.

And I come and I repent and He says, I love you. I forgive you. Now let's start again. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Father. It's our life, isn't it? That's our relationship with Jesus.

It's a series of just going through the process of living out His Lordship and messing it up inevitably, but coming back to Him and knowing that our sins are forgiven and that He loves us so much.

And He sets us up and He cleans us up and He says, all right, let's do this again. Let's keep trying. Let's keep walking. And let's keep living for Me and not for self. But again, I repeat to you that living for Christ means dying to self. And that's where Christianity has this incredible explosion of intent between the intention of my flesh and the desire of the spirit.

The Bible says that the spirit is literally in a constant state of conflict with the flesh, right? It says that they're constantly just doing this. The spirit and the flesh, they're just, they don't go together, right?

And I want to yield to the spirit, but my flesh so many times rises up and wants to just be in charge. I want to be in charge for whatever reason: pride, fear, stupidity, you name it. I've been there, done all of those.

And that, but yeah, I see so clearly where the life of the flesh gets me. Do you guys see that too? See how the life of the flesh just, it doesn't satisfy. And in fact, it kills. That's the hard part, is to watch something in my life, even as a Christian die, because I chose to live out the lusts of the flesh rather than to walk in the Spirit of Christ.

Many of us in 2016 saw the death of something because we chose instead of making Jesus Lord, to put that little tinsel crown back on our own head and pound it on the ground and say my way or the highway and God let us do it. And we saw something die this last year because of it. You may have seen a relationship die and you can't get it back.

You may have seen something else in this last year die. And some of you even might have been pretty angry at God when you saw that thing die. And God's saying to you, you know I told you all along the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) I never hid that from you. Did you think that didn't apply to you just because now you're a believer? It does.

There are things in our lives as Christians that can still die if we give in to the life of the flesh and carry out the desires of the sinful nature. We can still see job opportunities, relationships, family relationships, connections. We can still see things die. And God will allow us to watch those things die before our eyes to show us that He wasn't kidding. That this life of the flesh, it kills. And it can still kill.

Now, praise God, it can't take away your relationship with God, but boy, everything—you can watch. I've watched as everything around a believer died. Here's this person who believes in Jesus, but has just chosen for whatever reason for a period of their life to just live the life of the flesh. And you just watch as things around them die, and it's horrible, and it's not what God wants for us.

Jesus said, I have come that you would have life. (John 10:10) Not death and not just life but life to the full. I want you to have life, I want you to have abundant life. But one of the most important things for believers to confess is that abundant life is beyond my ability. I can't make it happen.

All I can do is yield to His Lordship, to His rulership in my life, and allow His life to come. And here's the beautiful part. For those of you who have experienced a death in 2016, listen, I don't know what God is going to do with that thing that died, whatever it might have been.

But I'll tell you something, He's still the God of the resurrection. And you got nothing to lose for whatever that was that you lost. Give it to Him, lay it at His feet, and confess to Him. This died because of my foolish pride and my sinful actions. I chose to live out the life of the flesh and this thing died, whatever it is. And Lord, I give it to You, and I'm taking my hands off it, because I cannot breathe the breath of life back in that thing. You can.

Now, Lord, I don't know if you will, in this particular situation, but you know what? It doesn't matter because the thing is dead anyway. And so I give it to You. I give it to You.

If we had time this morning, we could talk about some pretty amazing resurrections that have taken place in some of your lives. Resurrections in your marriages and homes, in other areas of your life, business, whatever.

God is able to do abundantly beyond what we can ask or think. But it starts by saying, Jesus, I want to make You Lord. And understanding the corollary to that is, I need to take self-off the throne and die.

Death doesn't come easy. It's a big, fat, bloody, screaming mess. And the death of self is no less challenging. And if you sit there today and think to yourself, yeah, that's a good suggestion. I'm going to die to myself this year. You're deceiving yourself. You can't do it. You can't do it. You have to come to Him and ask Him to do that work.

Do you guys understand from the Old Testament that circumcision is a picture of dying to self? A lot of times you read through the Old Testament, you come to that passage about circumcision and you're like, God says, this is the covenant sign between God and My people. And He gives this thing to Abraham.

And we're all like, how in the world am I going to explain this? I mean, this is just flat out embarrassing and this cutting away of the flesh. Oh, this cutting away of the flesh. And then we start seeing in the Scripture how God talks to His people about circumcising their hearts.

And we suddenly realize this is just a picture of what God desires to do in all of us when we make Him Lord. I have been crucified with Christ. And I no longer live, but Christ lives now in me. And this life that I'm now living in this body, it is no longer lived for self-gratification, personal pride, and everything else the flesh lives for. It is now lived by faith in the Son of God. Wow! This passage, Galatians 2:20. One of the most powerful passages you will ever read in your Bible.

And can I encourage you even as you go? From this place today and even go forward into 2017, that maybe you take time to meditate upon Galatians 2:20. And just ask the Lord to impart greater understanding to you about what it means to be crucified with Christ, to die to self, and to live to Him.

It's the most difficult thing you'll never do. And that's not necessarily a play on words. The reality is, you and I cannot crucify the flesh. We can only come to Jesus and say, do that work in me that only You can do.

Do you recognize, is there a witness in your heart that you need to be off the throne and that Jesus needs to be on?

How many of our problems would literally change overnight if we put Jesus on the throne? Literally overnight, marriage problems, family issues. If Jesus were put on the throne, how many of those things would literally be transformed overnight? It's incredible.

God wants to do this work in all of us. And I pray that while we're thinking this in this new year about shedding some weight that we would think too about the flesh and how it weighs us down from being who God wants us to be, who He's called us to be. The life of the flesh will always drag us down.