

**The Christian way to Live... Galatians 2:20 [11-21]
Live as if Jesus was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead
today, and is returning tomorrow**

Just over three weeks ago 48 of us joined to worship and eat the Passover Meal which set us up to awaken on Good Friday ready to acknowledge Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us. Then with a day in between to dwell on what his death meant for us it was up on Easter Sunday to celebrate Christ rising from the dead, but what now you might ask while we wait for Mother's Day, and then Pentecost?

As I have recently read through the book of Galatians, and previously, Romans in my devotional reading of the Bible. I have also of been reading on and off about Martin Luther, as we will be celebrating later in the year the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Combining these two, I have sensed Christ's call on our lives, that in our hearts and from the depths of our being, the Christian way to live is this...

Live each day as if Jesus was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is returning tomorrow! I am sure of it.

When the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Churches in Galatia that he himself had founded during his mission journey there, he was writing to counter the claims of legalistic Jews who had become Christians and infiltrated the church. They were telling the Galatian believers, who were mainly Gentiles, that they must keep and abide by the Law of Moses contained in the old covenant in order to be saved.

These Judaizers as they were known, were bad news for Paul and the fledgling church as they were teaching that a number of Old Testament ceremonial practices, including circumcision, were to remain binding on the New Testament Church. The Judaizers probably acted this way so that they might avoid persecution themselves from zealous Jews who considered hanging out with Gentiles as what we would call 'fraternizing with the enemy'. The Judaizers spread the word that Paul should not be considered a genuine apostle because all he did to gain the favour of Gentiles was to make the Christian message more appealing by removing from the gospel certain legal requirements.

So Paul writes this letter to respond to the Judaizers, establishing his apostolic authority and thereby substantiating the gospel he preached. When these Judaizers introduced extra requirements for a believer to be justified through works of the Law of Moses they had in actual fact perverted the gospel of grace. And unless they were stopped, they were going to bring Paul's converts into the bondage of legalism. For it is by grace through faith alone that people are justified and it is by faith alone that such a person is to live out their new life in Christ in the freedom of the Spirit.

Enter into the world in 1483, and eventually the church as a monk in the Augustinian order, then priest of the medieval Roman Catholic Church and later a university professor, none other than Martin Luther. Who with his own spiritual struggles read and meditated on the book of Galatians. He was taken in by the New Testament truth that people are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, by nothing more and nothing less, and that they are sanctified, which means you are set apart and made holy, not by legalistic works, but by obedience to God. Obedience that comes from faith in God's work for oneself, in and through oneself by the grace and power of Christ and the Holy Spirit. It was the rediscovery by Luther of this basic message of Galatians, along with Romans too, that brought about the Reformation in the 1500's. Galatians is often discussed and named as "Luther's Book", because Martin Luther relied so strongly on this letter in all his preaching, teaching and writing against the bad and errant theology along with the unbiblical church practices of the Catholicism of his day.

The Church and its leaders, can at times get it wrong and behave in a wrong manner as Martin Luther sought to point out and challenge in his time. Our passage reveals to us that Christian Leaders in Paul's time could be unduly influenced and get it wrong believing and acting in a way contrary to the Bible's teachings. Top notch people like the Head of the Church and apostle to the Jews, Simon Peter, Christ's declared 'Rock of the Church' and a most encouraging and holy Missionary, Barnabas. Both of these men together fell into hypocrisy just as the church and its pope and leadership had in Martin Luther's day. Failing to act in line with the truth of the Gospel and inventing their own customs and beliefs for people to believe, pay for and live by.

It is no wonder that it was Martin Luther who declared,

I preach [and live] as if Jesus was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today and is returning tomorrow.

So, what was Martin Luther meaning here? Can a Christian follow Luther's lead and live as if Jesus was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is returning tomorrow."

I believe Galatians 2:20 from "Luther's book" has some keys for us.

Living as if Jesus Christ:

1. *Was Crucified yesterday* means that I live as though "I have been crucified with Christ" having been personally united to Christ in His sin-bearing death, and because I've personally identified with Christ in this way my sinful past has been blotted out, wiped away just as though I had never sinned. As such, I have crucified the flesh (Gal 5:24), and I am now dead to sin (Romans 6:6-7) because I have been rescued from the evil present age (Galatians 1:4). We are not sinless but we are free from the shackles and power of sin and death having been crucified with Christ. So, if you're of Scottish descent or like the movie Braveheart, this is where you get to shout...Freedom, Freedom! I am free to live as if Christ was crucified and died for my sin yesterday. Secondly, Living as if Jesus Christ...

2. *Rose from the dead today* means that the believer also identifies with Christ in his resurrection, leaving the old blotted out life behind and sharing in Christ's resurrection life as Paul explains in this verse "*I who no longer lives, but Christ who lives in me.*" Just as resurrection followed death in the experience of Christ, so it is that the believer who dies with Christ is raised to a new quality of life here and now. It is because I am truly Alive in Christ as Christ is living in and with me. This begins with new birth when we receive Christ as Lord and Saviour and are born again by the Spirit of God.

So identifying with Christ's resurrection in the sense of new birth is already a fact so here is the thing. Christ's Living Spirit dwelling in us, as we continue to allow him, will increasingly exert himself in the believer's life for the world to see and know. All because we are dead to sin and alive to God, and by faith in the resurrection we get to live and shine daily in the light of this truth.

Can you think about this, consider it right now, WOW! It is amazing to think that we have that same resurrection power taking over and growing in us helping us to live and shine for Jesus just as if he rose from the dead today. Thirdly, Living as if Jesus

3. Is Returning Tomorrow

Paul wrote "*The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me*" And I might add is coming again one day to get me. Living by faith in the Son of God is living believing that just as the Word says, he will return. And Martin Luther inspired in the first instance by the Book of Galatians chose to spend each day living like Jesus rose today but is returning tomorrow. Living for Christ each day in this way of all things, lead him to eventually get married at age 42 to a former nun. And have would you believe it, they had six children, which for him was reputedly the happiest time of his life. He had previously suffered depression, But God in Jesus growing in him and exerting his influence didn't what him to be depressed any longer while he waited for the return of Christ so he gave him a wife and family to sort out his mental and emotional state and even get back to his other work for God.

During this time he remained focused on God and with Christ living within, and the expectation of his return any day, he kept at his mission of calling the church to account to rid itself of heresy and corrupt practices including the selling of indulgences which is where you could pay the church for the forgiveness of your sins rather than serve a lengthy or difficult penance. And not only this but you could pay for your dead friends and relatives who were already dead and therefore consigned, according to Medieval Catholic Church doctrine, a place called Purgatory to suffer for their sins until having completed their time of penance before they were allowed to enter heaven. That made up myth along with its false doctrine and unbiblical teaching just had to be exposed and done away with.

Living like Christ was returning tomorrow also meant that Luther continued on work that most important work of completing his translation of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures into German. Christ's spirit dwelling within energized him in his efforts and the thought of Christ's return forever kept his inner focus heavenward, and not on earthly riches and gain.

If we each were to take this on board today, living as though Christ was returning tomorrow, how would that affect your main focus and goals in life, along with your priorities including the building up of assets, possessions and property as opposed to things with an eternal significance?

What would our church look like if we took the apostle Paul's and Martin Luther's teaching on board?

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

What if we all together chose the Christian way to...

Live as if Jesus was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is returning tomorrow.