

Are you “CRUCIFIED with Christ”?

Galatians 2:20 examined

Light on the Rock

by Philip Shields

People love to quote Gal. 2:20, but do we know what we’re committing to when we are “crucified with Christ”? For that matter, why did Jesus have to die by crucifixion? What is it we’re crucifying? This is not an easy topic to accept and practice, but a huge key to Christian living.

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Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ. In a few weeks we’ll be taking the Passover, washing feet, drinking from a vial of red wine and remembering our Savior’s Passover. It may be helpful for you to go back to my sermon titled “Fresh Look at Passover Emblems” given in 2006 to help you prepare.

Today please turn with me to Galatians 2:20, one of those memory verses for so many.

We know the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover was the Crucifixion of the Lamb of God for us, to pay the penalty for our sins and for all who will confess their sins and accept Christ as their Redeemer, who gave Himself for us (Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph 5:25, etc). Of course our Father also gave His only Son for us. So we no longer roast a lamb at Passover because Jesus’ life and death fulfilled that.

Today let’s discuss Galatians 2:20. Imagine with me, if you will, having a dream – perhaps it’s a dark dream. In your dream, you’re walking home, and as you come into your neighborhood, a horror begins to unfold. Near your home you hear and see a bloodied man screaming in anguish, and Roman soldiers are holding him down even as one begins to pound nails into his hands and feet, to nail him to a beam. Your heart races, your anxiety levels rise. What’s going on? There already seems to be an upright beam or cross with someone already crucified up there, right on your front lawn! You want to turn away your eyes, but you just can’t believe this could be happening, so you pick up your pace, wondering why is this going on right in front of your own home! As you get closer it seems too horrible to be actually happening. And then, horror of horrors, as you come to within 20-30 feet of this nightmarish scene, you gasp in horror! The person being nailed down to be crucified is--- YOU. And then you look up at the Man already on the cross – and it’s Jesus! You hear the Romans talking about *you* and saying you also needed to be crucified with Christ, and that in fact you wanted to identify with His life and death.

Weird, you say? Listen on. It has everything to do with you.

Hello, family in Christ. This is Philip Shields, and today let’s study what Paul was inspired to say: that we’ve been crucified alongside Jesus Christ. How real is your crucifixion to you? Do you even ever think about it as such? Do you understand what it means? Do you live Gal. 2:20? It has everything to do with Passover. Let’s read it:

Galatians 2:20-21

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in [of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

This is one of those memory scriptures. But have you ever deeply pondered the wealth and depth of instruction that is in this passage that says you have been crucified? Do you grasp how serious this is? We memorize this passage, and glibly say it - - but who would want to be crucified?

This is a 2 part series: Part 1 is on being crucified with Christ. Part 2 will be to examine the meaning behind “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”. This is a natural follow-up from the ones I’ve just given about the righteousness we now have is Jesus’ righteousness, not our own righteousness by our own efforts, so that no man can boast!

So let’s get back to today’s sermon. Have you ever pondered what it means to be “*crucified* with Christ”? Paul said he wanted to know nothing “but Christ and Him crucified” – 1 Cor. 2:2. The topic of crucifixion is one Paul addresses several times.

Group discussion/personal introspection:

If you’d like, feel free to stop the tape or cd in a minute – or pause reading this transcript – and take 5 minutes to jot down what it means to you to be “crucified with Christ”. Take 5 minutes to discuss it among yourselves if you are in a group, then rejoin.

Keep in mind the sequence of Gal. 2:20 is very deliberate: first we have to die to the self before we can have Christ live in us. We have to be buried with Him, before we can be risen with Him. How can someone be risen anew until the former life has died and been buried? How can we ever be a “new creation” until we have discarded and are done with the old creation, the old nature? These are all related concepts to being crucified with Christ.

Luke 9:23-25 “Then He [Jesus] said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross daily**, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”

WHY DID Jesus Have to Die by Crucifixion?

Let’s first take a few minutes to understand why *Jesus* had to die by *crucifixion*. I have to cover this so we understand our own crucifixion better too, when we get to it in a few minutes. Why couldn’t God have just mercifully stopped His heart, or have Him die in His sleep for us? What do you say to that? Have you ever asked yourself why Jesus had to die by *crucifixion*? So brutally? I’m not asking why He had to *die* – but why He had to die that *way*.

Here are a few quick reasons why Jesus had to die by crucifixion.

1. The Death Jesus suffered had to be an execution to pay for sin; it pictured a criminal’s death.

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). It’s real death, not just a spiritual death of “separation from God”. Jesus really died, for real. His Spirit went back to the Father, and the body without the spirit is dead (**James 1:26**). Remember? “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (**Luke 23:46**). So the wages of sin is not - - as so many believe – eternal life separated from God. No! Mal. 4:3 says those who are the wicked will be “*ashes* under the feet of the righteous” (**Malachi 4:3**). “Eternal life separated from God while you’re being tortured forever and ever by a so-called merciful God”, is not what scripture says. Neither would it reflect a just God, to let people off the hook without paying the cost of sin. And neither would it be fair to suffer for eternity if you were among the millions and

millions who never even heard about Jesus Christ. Those who will be executed will be the unrepentant sinners who knew what they were doing and had an understanding of the truth.

Jesus paid the exact penalty for us by dying for us – not by old age, or in his sleep – but by execution, by crucifixion that our sins demanded. That's also why, on the cross, they could taunt Him, and He **had to endure the taunts: "He saved others, but Himself He cannot save."** Of course He could have miraculously called legions of angels and come off that cross. But, since He was being the sacrifice for sin, and "became sin for us", of course He couldn't save Himself! He had to stay there until the execution for you and me was complete.

Gal 3:13-14 says Christ became "a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith".

He was executed with 2 other condemned criminals so that there would be the "guilt of association" – the people knew those other crooks up there deserved to die, and if he was there with them, then He must be a crook too (as people would think) – See Mark 15:28.

But there's more to think about: part of the meaning of Jesus being crucified between 2 others being crucified, represents the ones who were actually crucified with Christ on that dark day represent humanity: those who do not ever repent, and those who start off as sinners but then repent and Jesus - - the DOOR to eternal life – opens the door to those who ask Him to remember them when He comes into His kingdom. Jesus replies, when we repent, we indeed will be with Him in Paradise.

2. Jesus also had to die by shedding His blood, for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." (**Hebrews 9:22**). In fact, blood was the means in the Old Covenant by which things were purified. Hebrews 9 is all about that. The very word "covenant" in Hebrew means "cutting".

We need to appreciate what Jesus went through so you and I can be forgiven, and so we can understand why Paul says in Heb.6 and 10 that if we treat His sacrifice cavalierly, we're in deep trouble. It should help us, through Christ in us especially, resist sin much more than we do. Perhaps if we could suddenly be thrust in front of Jesus hanging on the stake when we're tempted for a fleeting moment of gratification or pleasure – we might think again!

A crucifixion was a bloody place – though they often died because they couldn't breathe. They died of asphyxiation. The condemned were first scourged – whipped with strips that had bits of metal in them - - mercilessly until they looked like bloody hamburger. It wasn't uncommon to die from the scourging. Ps. 22:17 says they could see Jesus' exposed bones. Then they had large spikes pounded into their wrists or hands, and also into their feet. Lots of blood already. The raw hamburger-like body was also a magnet for crows, wasps, bugs, and hungry dogs. You can imagine what crows and dogs could do. Forget the images and paintings you see of a skinny man with a few flecks of blood coming down from the thorns. No, they crucified them stark naked, at about 1-3 feet off the road, and Jesus was beyond recognition by the time they nailed Him up. The Bible says "he was marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14) and beyond being recognizable. I'm sure Satan inspired the Romans to do a particularly vicious job on His scourging.

How did Jesus die? Of a broken heart? Not at all. He died by the shedding of blood. John 19:34 says a Roman soldier *had* taken a spear, like a bayonet, and used it to rip open Jesus' sides, and "out poured

blood and water”. The English indicates it after His death, but the Greek actually reads that a soldier had taken...”

John 19:34 “But one of the soldiers [had] pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”

He had to die before the Romans could smash his kneecaps, so that He could also be the perfect sacrifice, without any broken bones (John 19:35-37). He was pierced, definitely, for “all shall look upon Him whom they *pierced*.”

Regardless, it is clear Jesus was executed on the cross. It is clear He had already shed a lot of blood from the scourging and nailing and crown of thorns. So that requirement is already met. Then at some point His side was pierced, but either way—there was a lot of blood already shed even before that, fulfilling the requirement of the law – that remission is by the shedding of blood.

3. The way Jesus died had to be painful and brutal to picture how brutal and painful sin’s end result is. Crucifixions were painful. Your crucifixion will also be painful for you.

Sin has its pleasures for a moment, and how well we all know (Heb. 11:23-24). The high of the drug; the buzz of alcohol, the stolen pleasures of fornication or adultery, giving in to covetousness, letting loose with profanity when you get mad enough, getting away with a lie to keep yourself out of trouble. I supposed even, if you hate someone badly enough, killing that person you hate with a passion. There’s a carnal satisfaction and pleasure with all of that.

But, because of the passing pleasures of sin, we can forget how brutal sin is in the final outcome:

- the adulterer who breaks up a marriage and smashes the family unit – that’s brutal TO ALL affected. May God forgive us who have been involved in that.
- the buzz of alcohol hurts bad when as an intoxicated driver, you bring incredible sadness to a family whose loved ones you’ve killed or maimed for life.

Like a drunken speed boat driver rushing through the moorage area, sinners leave a lot of turbulence and wreckage in their wake. Some of you may not realize how much you left in your wake – but we’ve all done it to some degree. I preach to myself. Jesus’ suffered to picture how terrible a wake we left behind us. If you don’t think you’ve left behind a wake of debris, open your eyes. We’ve all at least murdered one person: Jesus Christ, whose life our sins demanded. Peter told the crowd in Acts 2 that they had killed Christ. We’ve all killed Christ. That is quite a wake to be leaving behind all by itself.

So there are many verses that say “it was necessary for Christ to *suffer* and die...” (**Luke 24:46**; 1 Pet. 2:23, 3:18, 4:1, etc). It pictures what happens when we don’t obey God. In the end, we suffer. So the way Jesus died had to be by extreme suffering.

There are other reasons.

- Jesus had to be “lifted up” like the serpent in the wilderness was lifted up on a pole and those who looked on the serpent were healed (John 3:14-15; 12:32; Numbers 21:7-9), picturing righteous Jesus becoming sin for us (2 Cor. 5:20), taking the curse, and becoming the curse, for us (Gal. 3:13-14). Thus the just requirement of God’s law was fully met.

CRUCIFYING SIN AND ITS PASSIONS IN US

So now let's get back to Paul saying "I have been crucified with Christ" in Gal. 2:20. Remember we also read earlier how Jesus says his disciples have to take up their cross and daily and come after him.

Rom 6:5-23 Today's English Version

"For since we have become one with him in dying as he did, in the same way we shall be one with him by being raised to life as he was. 6 And we know that **our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross** [we've been crucified with Christ], in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, **so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin.** 7 **For when a person dies, he is set free from the power of sin.** 8 Since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that Christ has been raised from death and will never die again--death will no longer rule over him. 10 And so, because he died, sin has no power over him; and now he lives his life in fellowship with God. 11 In the **same way you are to think of yourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus.**

(Rom. 6) 12 Sin must no longer rule in your mortal bodies, so that you obey the desires of your natural self. 13 ***Nor must you surrender any part of yourselves to sin to be used for wicked purposes.*** **Instead, give yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes.** 14 Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God's grace.

15 What, then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law but under God's grace? By no means! 16 Surely you know that when you surrender yourselves as slaves to obey someone, you are in fact the slaves of the master you obey--either of sin, which results in death, or of obedience, which results in being put right with God."

So here we see in Romans 6:6 that we're crucified with Christ. Keep that thought in mind.

Paul says "being crucified with Christ" has to do with nailing our old carnal self down and tackling sin. We no longer want sin as a way of life. We no longer serve sin. In fact, someone who has truly died, cannot sin and will not sin.

- **"Crucifying" our natures means we're taking extreme action. Drastic action, to finally nail sins in our lives. It means we've declared total war on our sin nature and we've signed its death warrant – by crucifixion with Christ.**

Galatians 5:22-25 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit".

There are passions of the flesh and there is a godly passion that evidences itself in enthusiasm and zeal. Elijah was a man of like passions as we are. But fleshly passions have to be nailed down.

Colossians 3:5 "Therefore ***put to death*** your members [sinful nature] which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." It goes on to say a few verses later that we instead put on Christ, just like Gal. 2:20 says.

I'll bet it took considerable effort on the Roman soldiers' part to nail a person to a stake or cross or tree. I'll bet they were squirming, screaming, kicking as a rule. I would be, if some foul breathed Roman soldier was trying to impale me, or nail me to a tree or something! Your passions are going to not go down without kicking and screaming as well. But I can see several Romans holding this guy down while one of them pounds the spikes in. That squirming convict represents our fleshly passions and desires, that have to be nailed down! It won't be easy. Our passions don't want to get nailed down. And we can tend to feel sorry for ourselves and be easy on ourselves.

So don't think nailing your wrong passions and sinful desires will be easy. It won't be! But how do we do it? We can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (**Phil. 4:13**). Have we decided on all-out war against sin? No quarter will be given, no prisoners taken – nope. We've decided to totally put to death all aspects of our sinful nature. Totally. Or *have* we?

What is it that we each need to finally crucify? What carnal desires do each of us need to put to death in our lives? **What sins are each of us giving safe harbor to**, that will keep us from being given a great reward in the kingdom – if we'll be there at all, if we are giving safe harbor to any sins in our lives? Some of sin's pleasures seem so harmless. So cute. "Come on, I can hang on to this little weakness, can't I?" Goliath was once a "harmless baby" who was allowed to live – but grew up to become a giant problem to Israel. Sins are like that. We have our baby sins that don't seem so bad – but which can grow up to plague us if we don't get them nailed down first!

WHATEVER 'MEANS THE WORLD' TO YOU IS ALSO CRUCIFIED

There's more. Turn to Galatians 6:14.

Galatians 6:14 "But God forbid that I should boast except in ***the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world***"

So we're crucified with Christ, and we have our own cross, and now the world has been crucified to us as well. A lot of neat stuff, at least to a natural mind, is getting nailed down here. The whole world.

Jesus at one time said **whatever "means the world" to you must be put behind what Christ means to us. We** can gain the whole world, but if you forfeit your very soul, what has it gained you? (Matthew 16:26).

Matthew 10:37-39

"He who loves father or mother **more than Me is not worthy of Me**. And he who loves son or daughter **more than Me is not worthy of Me**. 38 And he who **does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me**. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

So there are times when we must sacrifice a relationship if it means a choice of either God's way or a relationship with a loved one. If a brother or sister or father or wife makes you decide – "It's either me – or that belief of yours, that church of yours" – what are you going to do? Jesus says we better have that straight in our hearts, that the love for God comes first.

In the first 15 or so verses of Romans 6, Paul speaks over and over as well about being baptized into Christ's death, and being buried with him so that we can be raised in Him, a new life, a new being, with a new direction and goals and priorities.

So first and foremost, I think it must be clear that being "crucified with Christ" means we surrender the "self", our own goals, our fears, our worries. We have to hand over to God anything that is a big concern or even desire of our heart. He very oftentimes will actually let us have the desires of our hearts – and even many times over – if we first are willing to give them up.

Psalm 37:4-5

"Delight yourself also *in the LORD*, and *He shall give you the desires of your heart*.
5 Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass."

You see the sequence: delight yourself – not in your own plans and goals – but "in the Lord". And then what? Instead of having to forego whatever dreams you thought you had, "and He *shall* give you the desires of your heart".

THE COST PAID TO CRUCIFY THE SELF

I'm going to head off in a different direction now for about 10 minutes – but it will have crucial meaning to really understanding this subject, and I hope I can get this part across.

Remember Paul has said from his opening words that when we accept Jesus and Jesus comes into our lives by His spirit, and when we follow His Spirit and walk in the Spirit, we are "IN Christ". Do you have God's spirit? Christ has set up residence in you and He is in you. You are now the body temple of God. But you are then also considered "in Him" if you have His Spirit. We are becoming one spirit with God.

1 John 4:13

"By this we know that we abide *in Him*, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit."

We'll talk more some day about being in Him, but this last verse says when we have His Spirit, we are considered "in Him", because having His spirit puts us into the church, which is His Body. So His spirit makes me a part of His limbs, or His organs, His mind. Other verses say if we abide in love, we are in Him, and we become His – and get this – *He also becomes ours*. He becomes our Savior, our God, our Redeemer. We're part of each other, and there is a mutual ownership, as much as Abraham could call God "HIS" God, the God OF Abraham, so can we. And we are the children OF God. God's children. You see what I mean by mutual ownership?

God is now mine in the sense that I can now call Him "my father". Jesus is now my God, as Father is my God. God at one time became "the God of Abraham" – Abraham's God. Do you realize how great that is? We have no power over God, so I'm not implying that. I'm just saying as much as we are His, He is now also ours.

The POINT is: a relationship is forged. When I say "the God of Philip", or "the God of Diane" or whatever your name is, God becomes your God, as much as He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Much more so, you realize you are in Christ, and He is in you – and in fact, Father sees you as PART of the very body of His righteous Son. The one true Creator God is my God. Are you feeling

the JOY of that? The import of that? The grandeur of that? I have no power over Him...I'm just saying I became His, and He became mine – and the love relationship is growing. You'll see it even much deeper yet when I cover the sermon about how God is a God of Covenants.

To understand “being crucified with Christ” we have to understand this concept. His crucifixion for each of us must become very personal. Jesus didn't just die for *mankind*. It's much more personal than that. Paul talks about Christ this way in **Galatians 2:20** “...who loved ME and **gave himself for me**”.

Do you have and feel that kind of personal relationship with your Savior? God doesn't want you feeling lost in the crowd. He wants you to know He chose you, you specifically, from before the foundation of the world – or you might as well as cut out **Ephesians 1:4** from your Bible. Jesus came to save you, personally. Jesus came to bring you into His body, personally. And Jesus is not into failing any of His missions. God and Jesus love you personally. God bought you, paid for you, and you became His. When title to something passes, it is no longer the property of the seller - - but the buyer. All interest and rights to an item are forfeited once a sale is made and title is transferred. So you are now owned by God and he has a very special interest in you, for after all, He paid a very, very high price - for *you*.

THIS is the connection to being crucified. Crucifying COSTS. Very high costs. Now watch this:

How much are you worth? How much did God pay for you?

Well, value is in the eyes of the beholder, right? You may think something isn't worth more than a dollar, and someone else may see something of much greater value in that item and pay a million for it. Do you ever feel worthless? I sometimes do. Don't you, from time to time? But that's Satan talking. He wants you to feel like dung; just so much dirt. Don't listen to him.

Don't we assign worth to something based on what someone is willing to pay for it? Right? A great baseball player is paid millions because he is seen as being “worth it”; he has skills, talent, abilities and ability to draw in a crowd – so he's paid millions. Someone whose skills are dime a dozen, isn't paid as much.

So how much are *you* worth? How much would someone pay for you? How much *did* Someone (with a capital S) actually pay for you? God paid with the blood, the life of His own Son. For you. For me. I have lost a son – but I've never *offered* my son so someone else wouldn't have to die. My love would have to be indescribably profound to do that. Well, God – and Jesus - did just that.

Now keep this cost in mind when it comes to crucifying your self. You and I find it costly still to give up the self. My point in this is that the self puts a high price on itself, and nailing that self to a cross is difficult, pricy, tough to come up with, and painful. It was painful for Christ to be nailed to the cross, it was costly – and it is going to be painful and costly to nail ourselves

So the first point to grasp when we are “crucified with Christ” – is that we are in Him so much and He in US so much, that the first meaning is that we identify with his death, we are part of it, we boast in the cross of Christ, we are not ashamed of the cross.

Galatians 6:14 “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, **and I** to the world.”

There's something about being "crucified with Christ" that results in us identifying with that cross, that time, on that hill, on that day. We're there. We're with Him. We're part of it. We're in Him as HE is crucified.

BACK TO WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST"?

First of all, now that we are in Him, part of HIS body, we live in complete union with God. We therefore say with Paul we are not ashamed of the cross (Gal. 6:14), but in fact make it our boast.

So let's look at what it means to us.

- **Someone who has his own cross, and takes it up – is on His way to being crucified. He's going to die. Now get this: when someone dies, normally his/her hopes and dreams and plans perish.** Let me say again: His dreams stop. So does his or her pain. I want you hear that. When one dies, all worries end. All fears are gone. A dead man has no worries or fears. We say "rest in peace" because that's what we expect when someone dies: no more pain, no more suffering, no more doubts and fears, no more self-will, no more struggles. They're dead!

So are you and I crucified or not!? Or do we like to keep the "old man", the old nature alive?

Keep that in mind as we continue.

- **So a crucified person dies to self – and so do the gods we have placed before God. There is a profound sense of brokenness that has to occur.** You might wish to ponder this. It means a total and complete surrender of everything that has been so important to us. Anything we put before God, is a god before God. We can either voluntarily surrender our gods to the one true God – or wait for God to smash them.

We can't have a relationship with the One True God if we have anything before Him. That's what Jesus said in the verse we read earlier that we can't love someone or something more than God (Matthew 10:37-38).

Most of us would say we have no pagan gods – because we think of actual idols. But there are other idols we have, and these have to do with self, especially our self image, probably much more than we realize. In a sense, our biggest idol is our self image we put out there. "Image" is just another word for idol. That has to die, has to be crucified, has to be given up.

I know that goes against the grain of modern psychology. That goes against the grain of everything society tells us – but God tells us that if we humble ourselves, give ourselves up, crucify ourselves, HE will grant us more than our minds can even grasp right now. But in HIS own time, in HIS own way, He makes us beautiful, He will raise us up – all the way to the very city He has designed and prepared for those of us who are the bride of Christ! By the way, I believe only the Bride of Christ will actually be able to call that their city. The rest of the world will be made into a jewel where the nations will live. But heavenly Jerusalem is for the Bride, and probably ONLY the Bride. Others will be able to visit – and come worship there – but as a residence city: that's for the bride. I'll discuss that more later.

So what are those idols or IMAGES we have?

When we were coming into young adulthood, we put up a certain image of what *our marriage* was going to be like; we had an image of having brilliant health as *we* got older. We had an image

in our mind's eye of what *our* children were going to be like. **These were all images we had set up in our mind when we were a young adult, right?** Dreams are OK – but if they were OUR dreams, instead of God's will for us, it was part of our image that we were creating. Those dreams, which are not wrong of and by themselves, could become idols and gods if we placed their importance ahead of God.

We were going to experience the “American Dream” – a beautiful home, lovely family, big 401k retirement account, 2-3 fancy cars.... And so now we work our buns off, and make being #1 at work and in our community our god, an image we place before God.

And God says “I can't be #1 in your life as long as you have something else more important in your life. I won't accept being 2nd or 3rd in your life. You have to love me with ALL your heart, mind and soul – and love me more than your other ‘loved ones’.”

So commandment #1 is ‘I AM the Lord your God, you shall have NO other gods before – or besides – me.’ God's saying, “I'M IT!”. *God* then goes on to add in commandment #2, that images, idols and concepts we have, which we you put as priorities in our lives ahead of God – all must be smashed too. That's all part of crucifying the self, I believe.

Brethren, when we come before God with complete brokenness, we surrender all our self-made images, hopes and dreams to God and let HIM now decide what to do with our lives. I'm not saying they're not important any longer. I'm saying we surrender them to God. Our marriage, our loves, our fights, our worries, our concerns, our health, our employment, our career, our position at work, our ranking among the sales agents – all of that gets surrendered to God for Him to handle now.

We've been trained so much to try to fix things ourselves. We pride ourselves in being able to sort things out without outside help – that we apply that too much even to God. We try to fix our own marriage, *our* own health, *our* own finances, *our* own child rearing issues. ... it's all about us at that point, and not enough surrendering to God to surrender to what He wants to do with our lives. There's not enough crucifying of the self going on here. Especially when things are a deep concern is when we need to crucify the self, with all the images we had set up, and hand it all over to God to deal with. And then in faith, thank and rejoice and praise and then stand and see the wonders of God unfold before you – in HIS time, in HIS way.

And remember: sometimes God's promises are not seen in this life, but in the life to come. Like Hebrews 11 says, “these all died, *not* having received the promises”. Ponder that. Can you live with that?

GUILT IS ALSO NAILED DOWN

But much more also gets nailed down. *God's marvelous and infinite grace is greater than all our guilt from sin. It is so great it pardons and cleanses us from all guilt. So when we are crucified with Christ, we also accept the crucifixion of all our past, ALL our sins, ALL our guilt, ALL our shame, ALL the humiliation we earned from the sins we committed - - regardless of what man may want to do to expose any awful past any of us has. They better beware, for what goes around comes around. God forgives those who are forgiving. God forgets the sins of those who let others forget theirs.*

True enough, we may have to endure consequences of past sins. But the shame and eternal consequence of eternal death and damnation – all that is cancelled. Accept it, relish it, share it – and do the same.

AS we wash feet this Passover, remember we are re-enacting what the perfect Savior did: he got down on his hands and knees and said you are deserving to have clean, washed, comfortable feet – symbolizing much more. Jesus was saying I'm washing away your dirt, your guilt, your sins. And now when WE do it for one another, we are looking up into the face of the one whose feet we're washing and saying, "whatever your past sins and failures, I forgive too, I wash away them away with Christ." In fact, nowadays, feet we wash are literally clean, and that's a good reminder that in fact spiritually this sister or brother in front of us HAS already been washed by Jesus.

But then we each get into the chair and say to our brother or sister, "now I need you to wash my feet. I need to know that you too will now see me as washed, forgive me, wash me, cleanse me, in the blood and life of Christ". As we wash one another's feet, we are reminding ourselves that we are to be forgiving of one another, to see each other as washed. Sure, it also means we are to serve one another, and be humble – but it means more: see your brother and sister as washed, and you're an instrument of helping your brother and sister feel washed. You know? It's a lot easier to accept God's forgiveness when we see the body of Christ also being willing to forgive and forget.

*Dear brother and sister in Christ, have you LET your past, your guilt, your shame, your disgust with your past sins finally be nailed to Jesus' cross?*** I preach to myself.*

Now don't forget: don't ever deny your Lord. He stretched out His arms willingly to be nailed down for you – and we must now openly proclaim our identification and allegiance to Him by the way we live and by every word, every act, every breath we take.

And whatever you do, NEVER be ashamed of the cross of Jesus. Don't get caught up in the insipid arguments about whether He was nailed to a beam, a cross or a tree. Peter says they put his cross beam on to a tree. Paul says he was "crucified". The Greek is *stauros* – and it can mean a variety of things. But we get so caught up in so much minutia we miss the big picture! GLORY in the cross of Christ. Make it your boast as Paul said in Gal. 6:14. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom 1:16). Jesus says if we are ashamed to identify with Him, He will be ashamed to be identified with us (Mark 8:38). But in fact, Jesus says clearly that He is NOT ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters (Heb. 2:11). As a child of God, Jesus sees you as His brother and sister! WE must identify with Him now, openly, unashamedly – even the cross itself. In fact, we *love* to tell the story of Jesus and His love whenever possible. God is not ashamed to be called their God (Heb. 11:16). This becomes our story, this becomes our song – praising our Savior all the day long.

A CRUCIFIED PERSON CAN'T DO WHAT HE/SHE WANTS

- **a crucified person is literally NAILED DOWN – he can't do anything HE wants to do.** He can't get up and walk away; he can't reach for a drink or scratch an itch. He can't decide to do something else. Anything else! A crucified person has given up – or lost – his rights, his desires, his hopes and dreams. **A person crucified cannot do what he wants to do.** Guess what? IF we've been truly crucified with Christ, we too must **do what GOD wants** – not what we want.

If you really understand this, you'll understand the verses which tell us we are to no longer live according to what we want in life, but what God wants in life. I gotta tell ya, in the business world, we get so much about "what's going to be, is up to me" – and nothing about seeking God's will.

I like the way TEV puts **1 Peter 4:2** "From now on, then, you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God's will and not by human desires."

We are so into "rights" in this country. The U.S. constitution is based on rights. You who are Americans hearing this – you in particular may find it hard to truly give up your rights. After all we're told our rights are inalienable. So we have the Bill of Rights, Human rights, Children's Rights, Animal rights, Student Rights, Equal Rights, gay rights, a woman's rights, illegal aliens' rights – rights, rights, rights.

Well, God has called us to seek what HE feels are right. **He's called us to crucify our rights and trust him for the outcome.** For example, Paul tells us (Romans 12:19-20) when we've been wronged, not to seek revenge. Instead of killing our enemy, we are to fill him up, feed him. Give him drink when he needs to be refreshed. Think about what that's telling us: surrender your right to be angry. Surrender your pride, your ego, your anger, your fear that he might hurt you again. We're called to surrender our right to be bitter and to demand justice be done. Leave it to God. And remember as you treat your enemies the way God says to, God will bless you for that. There's a crucifying of the self that has to happen when we do that!

We have a "right" to be treated fairly, we think. God says HE decides what is fair and not, especially when we're tempted to accuse GOD of not being fair (Romans 9). God says "surrender to me your right for fairness and put yourselves into the court of Ultimate Judge for a decision HE thinks He wants for you, when He wants it. We even tend to think God can be unfair sometimes – and Paul responds in Romans 9:14-24 by saying, "how dare the pot question the Potter".

Other examples – and I think some will rebel against this list, but then again, what would it mean to "be crucified with Christ"?

- your right to be loved by others – while remembering God loves you
- your right as a husband to have sex when you need it, and still giving agape love to your wife whether or not she fulfills her command to not defraud you of your sexual needs (1 Cor. 7:1-5). Men, crucify yourselves and trust it to God.
- your right as a wife to demand your husband treat you with dignity and respect, and still honor and obey Him as unto the Lord

Are we getting the point? I could go on and on. In fact, God tells us husbands in Ephesians 5 that the PATTERN set before us is CHRIST, and the way HE **loves** the church. We are to – once again, a version of crucifying the self – lay down our lives for our wives (Eph. 5:25-31). Christ's wife was dirty, but He loved her so that He could cleanse her, it says, and so that she could be presented without spot or wrinkle. We are to – like Christ – **nourish and cherish** our wife, as Christ does the church (v.29), whether or not the wife is doing her part from our point of view. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church, and gave Himself for her...(Eph 5:25).

Husbands, if we feel our wives are not doing their part -- not honoring us, not obeying us, not submitting to us, not even giving us our sexual love as our due (1 Cor 7) – then it is hard to lay down our lives for the wife! **That's what crucifying the self is all about: laying down our lives for one another and submitting to one another.** Wives, you're not off the hook either. Whether or not your

husband is being the husband he is to be, you also have to crucify your desires, your feelings, your needs – and obey the word of God, just as the man has to – *whether or not our spouse is doing his part*. It must feel like you're being crucified to submit to and obey a husband you feel is going the wrong way. But women are told to do that, "as unto the Lord".

"Crucifying the self" means **giving up our right to be the dominant person. We are to esteem others BETTER than ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4)** and see others worthy of us serving THEM.

- someone who has crucified herself is asking God to nail down her – or his – **tongue**. God says if we can perfectly control our tongues, we are a perfect person (James 3:2). We think it's our right to say what's on our minds. I'm trying to learn this one better myself. I'm outspoken and consider it my right to say my mind. There are times to remain silent, many times in fact. That's a time to crucify the self again! Give that up, surrender that right to God and trust Him instead.

Are we seeing how New Creation can't happen, Jesus living in us can't and won't happen, until this first step of crucifying the self happens. We have to get ourselves out of the way, so Jesus CAN live in us. That's why so many verses talk about letting this mind be in you, or not letting yourself be troubled, and so on. I think you get the gist of this. Crucifying the self means nailing down our own desires, our goals, our own mission statement, our marital and financial dreams, our will -- and now surrendering it all to God. It means surrendering our fears, our worries, our concerns, our pains, our health into His capable hands.

It's in the surrender of all these fears, concerns, burdens, pride, self-will, bitterness, sadness, grief, ambitions and dreams that WE quit fighting God and God's will – and start to let Him live in us as He wishes. . . . and it is in the end, always for great good. Surrender your marriage to God. Surrender your finances to God's will. Surrender your fears to God's will.

God can't live in you and me until we surrender all. All our trophies, all of what's been important. All our trophies are made of glass. They're fragile. Our castles we build in this life are nothing but sand castles and will soon perish with the first waves. But what God is building for us is a future that cannot decay, cannot be stolen or burned or rust or fade away. But we have to give up our sand castles and trust there is a better one coming. We have to crucify our self and trust the new life that will happen will be better.

Are you locked up in emotional prisons and spiritual chains of darkness and pain? Are you in your own midnight hour, feeling all is lost? Paul and Silas could have (Acts 16). Surrender that situation to God and start singing hymns of praise like Paul and Silas did. Just maybe, God will do with you as he did with Paul on that midnight, in that Jail, as they began to sing praises – God shook the prison with a great earthquake, and delivered them! (Acts 16:25-26). Those stories are there for us! Surrender your situation – and then let God shake heaven and earth in your behalf!

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS AND SURRENDERING THE SELF

Even when all appears lost, surrender it to God. Paul was on death row, condemned to either be crucified or have his head chopped off. It was in that context that he wrote that incredible book of Philippians, which is SO full of hope. What would you have written about, if your butt was on a cold stone dungeon floor every day? You know what Paul wrote about? Let this mind be in you; whatever is pure, noble, lovely, good report – think on these things. He waxed eloquent about the righteousness of God. In Phil. 4 he reminds us to not worry, or stew or fret, but in all things give thanks and the

peace of God that surpasses all understanding..... Brethren! Realize something here! Remember what he was going through as he wrote all that.

How could he do it? How could he write so joyously about knowing how to be abased, and how to abound – and yet in all things to be content-- and that he could do all things in Christ, who strengthens me? HOW did he do it? You should go back and read Philippians with all this background now.

What would I be writing home about if I were in his shoes? By this time, he was chained 24/7 to a Roman guard! Did you realize that? Instead of complaining about that, what does Paul have to say about it? He loves the fact that he could use that time to tell each guard about Jesus and the coming kingdom! He says that because of his chains, Christ is preached (Phil. 1:12-14, 18) and the gospel is furthered to the whole palace guard and to everyone else. He ends the book with “all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household” (4:22). Wow!

Paul was no longer the one living His life – but Christ was living in him! That’s how he could write all that. Paul had let the old nature die, with its needs and wants.

MY QUESTION IS THIS: HAVE WE IN FACT SURRENDERED, AND CRUCIFIED THE SELF AT ALL?

What does that mean in real terms, in plain English? It means surrendering your desires. It means GIVING UP what YOU want to do, what you want to FEEL inside. It means TRUSTING God that what GOD wants to do IN you and WITH you and even FOR you is so much better than what we could ever dream by ourselves. More on that part in the next sermon.

So “crucifying the self” means we really fight – even as we suffer – fight temptation til it hurts. Really fight it. I know I have so often given in to temptation. **What’s the key? – THAT’S WHAT WE will cover next time as we talk about letting Christ live his life in you.**

FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE US

One final thought as we wrap up: How does a Christian who is crucifying himself have any joy? The joy comes in that we know what follows! There’s going to be a new creation, a resurrection of Christ in us. And we know there is going to be tremendous JOY in our lives that we’ve never experienced the likes of before, when we have truly, unconditionally surrendered.

Hebrews 12:1-2

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**”

Brethren, just as Jesus was glorified and exalted and blessed – so shall we be, if we follow in His steps and go through at least the figurative crucifixion of the self.

I started this sermon by imagining you had had a bad dream of being crucified. Brethren, it’s not a bad dream. It’s a hard dream, but not a bad one. When we look to the joy set before us, we will readily

begin the process of crucifying the self, and surrendering our worries and fears and hopes and dreams to God – and then watching in amazement with what He replaces all that with. And most of it will be with glories beyond description in the life yet to come. As in Hebrews 11, they all died NOT having received the promises, but they will. And so will you and me.

And in the meantime, our lives right NOW can have so much more joy and peace – when we let this carnal self finally be crucified. I believe it's such a giant key to peace and joy.

Next time we get into the consequence of that: how Jesus can now live in us once the self is out of the way. We'll also cover how to let Jesus live on this earth once more – this time through you. That's the next time.

Pass the word. Tell others about this website and the good news you are hearing from it. Till next time, your brother in Christ, Philip Shields, who is trying to do these very things I'm preaching; trying to crucify myself, my images, my fears, my sins – and so I can let Christ live in me. Till next time, stay close to God.