

"To Life from Death"
Galatians 2:20

Attention: This morning, with Christians all over the world, we will celebrate the Lord's Supper, communion, the Eucharist. It is a celebration of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection.

On a more personal level, you may be having a grief experience of your own in the loss of a loved one, or of a desire, or of a dream.

Today we will celebrate life together, but it is a kind of life that comes only by passing thru death.

In this case, we not only grieve what is lost, but participate in the death experience ourselves.

In the book of Galatians, God presents to us a new way of living. The old way is Law: discover God's standards, and get Eternal Life by abiding by them as best you can.

Unfortunately, Law brings death, not life, for by law, all stand condemned. However, it does perform a good function, for by destroying any hope of salvation by human efforts, the law actually opens the way to new life by Grace.

In Gal 2:20 we see encapsulated the essence of the good news: (NKJV) "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 the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

I preached this text for the first time on the first World Communion Sunday in my first Pastorate in 1973, 41 years ago.

Gal. 2:20 sums up a gospel message of Death, Resurrection, Renewal and Consecration that needs to be applied to every individual seeking Eternal Life:

Death: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live"

Resurrection: "but Christ lives in me."

Renewal: "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me"

Consecration: "and gave himself for me"

1. Eternal Life begins with Death "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live"

This is a matter of your Membership in Christ.

Because we start out as members of a world that resists God's way, goes its own way, and puts its confidence in its own 'goodness', something must die in us.

The Bible calls it our "old self": Romans 6:6 (NKJV) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

We are called to say "no" to trusting in ourselves and our performance in this world, and trust in Christ alone, and His performance alone.

Our world is used to saying "no" to nothing.

Since Adam & Eve, we do all we can to put ourselves at the center of our world.

Death is at the center of the message of Grace:

- Abraham and Isaac as sacrifice
- The Passover & sacrificial system.
- John the Baptist of Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God"

Christ's death is necessary for your forgiveness, and sufficient for it: nothing needs to be added for it to be effective. He was rejected, slain and raised!

This order, rejected, slain, raised, is also the order of the Christian life. When you trust in and identify with Christ in his death, your "old self" dies with Him and new life from Him takes its place.

Death must come to everything I do in my own strength or where I retain control, both my bad deeds and my good.

Without a radical break from life lived by my own means, there is no true Christianity. Many today want new life in Christ, but they also want to keep the old life. They want a "double life".

v. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Or "for nothing!"

We have a tendency to live by law, judging others and ourselves by whatever laws we accept.

Jesus Christ, however, calls people to "regard no one according to the flesh [from a worldly point of view]. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer." (2 Cor. 5.16)

This rejection of the old ways has to take place daily. Luke 9:23 (NKJV) Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

You can't get to new life in Christ without new Membership, and it's not a matter of joining the church, but of joining yourself to Jesus Christ.

This new Membership replaces the old membership in "the church of self-confidence".

Trans: so Eternal Life begins with Death.

2. Eternal Life involves Resurrection: "but Christ lives in me."

This is a matter of your Maturity in Christ.

Once you become a Member of Christ, the next step is Maturity. Most people come to this in a Christian home, or thru a Spiritual mentor or a small group.

While Christ is "in you" when you first believe, there is a process by which it becomes evident that He is "living in me."

Eternal Life begins with our forgiveness, and goes on to our obedience. The new life is not just a new influence or a new motive, it is a new life!

We are now to live as if we had already died, been to heaven, and come back again as risen.

You and I are called to be dead to the worthless treasures of this world, and alive to God's new ways.

Romans 6:13 (NKJV) And do not present your members [parts of your body] as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

trans: Eternal Life is about Death & Resurrection, Membership & Maturity, and ...

3. Eternal Life involves Renewal: "the life which I now live in the flesh [the body] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me "

This is a matter of your Ministry for Christ. How is your love for Christ expressed? In your Ministry to others.

Jesus showed His love by coming to us and demonstrating it in His ministry.

He came to serve, not to be served.

You and I are called to love people in practice, just as He, in love, taught, counseled, reproved, fed and healed people.

trans: He calls you to Death in Membership, Life in Maturity, Renewal in Ministry, and also ...

4. Eternal Life involves Consecration: "and gave himself for me"

This is a matter of your Mission to the world.

The word used for "gave" is much more than that word relates. It is a matter of "gave up himself"
NASB says, "delivered Himself up for me"

Following Christ requires total dedication and commitment to following Him.

God is on a Mission to save a lost world. What are you and I doing to work with Him in it?

Do you have the attitude of the apostle? Philippians 2:17 (NKJV) Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Conc: As we take the Lord's Supper, we remember His Death and Resurrection, and it calls us to

Death to Membership in salvation by Lawkeeping

Resurrection to Maturity in Christ

Renewal in loving Ministry in the body of Christ

Consecration to the Mission God has for you and me in reaching our world for Him.