

Crucified Christians

Galatians 2:20

Over 1900 years ago our Lord Jesus Christ went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray in preparation for dying upon the cross for our sins. The Gethsemane experience was a painful experience. The Bible says that he prayed until he was in great agony and the sweat became great drops of blood. He was praying, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass away. If there is any other way than to die upon the cross, please, I don't want to take upon myself the sins of the world and be separated from you." But then as he prayed in this great agony, he said, "Not my will but Thine be done." So he went from the agony of Gethsemane to the cross.

The cross was another terrible, painful experience. Nails were driven through both hands; a great spike driven through his feet. He hung upon the cross for six long hours in agony as he took upon himself all the sins of mankind and died to redeem us. All of the words I could think of and adjectives could never describe the agony of the crucifixion completely.

In Galatians 2:20, the Bible says "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The Christian life is the noblest and happiest that one can possibly live, and yet the Christian life is no bed of roses. The Christian life is a battle; a daily battle. The Christian life is a demanding life. The Christian life demands our full and complete surrender. If I stand before you and say that the Christian life is all joy and all sweetness and that everything is lovely, I would be a liar.

The Christian life is not always sweetness and the Christian life is not always joy. The Christian life can also be trials and tribulations as I've indicated in the introduction it is a daily fight.

Personally, I would rather fight the Christian life daily and then in the end have Jesus welcome me into heaven than to give in what seems to be the easy way - the way of the devil and then in the end have eternity in hell.

But our text says I am crucified with Christ. What does that mean? We know what Christ's crucifixion meant. It meant untold suffering and agony and bleeding. And it meant death. The Christian life means the same thing. If I am crucified with Christ it means death. It means death to sin; it means death to the old life. It means death to the old lusts of the world. It means death to the old selfish ambitions. Crucifixion means death. I am crucified with Christ. The Apostle Paul did not attain this standard in one month. He did not attain it in one year. In fact he never did attain it fully. His own assessment of his life was that I am the chief of all sinners. But being crucified with Christ was his goal that he was aiming for. He intended to reach that goal. The secret of it was this: I live, not yet I but Christ liveth in me. Paul was not able to attain this goal of being crucified with Christ in his own strength and his own power. He had to depend upon the strength of Jesus Christ to help him where he was weak. And so he said Christ liveth in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. These words then are kin to Paul's words in Phillipians 4:13, when he affirmed: I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Paul was never able to do it in his own strength and neither can we.

What does it mean for us to be crucified with Christ, then? If we die to self, if we die to selfish ambitions, if we die to sin, what does it mean?

I. First of all, if I am crucified with Christ, and if you are crucified with Christ, it means that our feet are going to have to be crucified feet. Jesus' were. As his feet were crossed they tell us that a great spike was driven through both feet. The flesh was torn; the arteries were severed. The feet bled. Can you even imagine the tremendous pain that he suffered in agony as that

spike was driven into both feet. And if I am crucified with Christ then my feet must be crucified with his feet. And what does that mean? To me it means that we must be careful where our feet take us. We must be careful that our feet do not take us into the pathway of sin. We must be careful that our feet take us to good places.

For example, in James 1:27, the Bible says "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." If my feet are crucified with Christ's feet then my feet must take me to the widows, and what is the purpose of going to the orphans and the widows unless we go to help them? If we find that there is an orphan in need then our feet should take us to that orphan, to feed that orphan or to clothe that orphan. If we find a widow in our midst who is in need then our feet should take us to that widow to repair her house, to take her to the doctor or to provide her with financial assistance or whatever that widow might need. That is my understanding of crucified feet.

There is another beautiful passage of scripture that explains to me what crucified feet are. These are the words of the Lord himself, found in Matthew 25, beginning with verse 34: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

If we are crucified with Christ; if we then indeed have crucified feet, our feet will take us to the homes of those who are hungry and we will feed them. Our feet will take us to the homes of those who are thirsty and I think this would certainly imply spiritual thirst as well as physical thirst, and those who are thirsty of the water of life should be fed, should be given drink. If we have crucified feet we will go to the homes of those who are thirsty for the water of life and offer them the water of life - the Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be filled. If we have crucified feet we will go to the homes of those who are naked and clothe them; we will go to the homes and to the hospital beds of the sick and visit them and encourage them. We will go to those who are in prison and visit them and deliver the word of God. This, to me, is what it means when it says I am crucified with Christ. If I have crucified feet then they will be used in that manner.

If we indeed have crucified feet then we will understand the meaning of Romans 10th chapter, 15th verse: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" The church at Jerusalem was composed of members who had crucified feet. And we know this because Acts 8:4 says: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." When persecution came to the church at Jerusalem and their feet went elsewhere, they went elsewhere to do one thing - the thing that all Christians should do - and that is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to everybody, everywhere. I am crucified with Christ. If I am, then my feet will be crucified.

II. In the second place, I would also call your attention to the fact that a Christian's hands should be crucified. If I am crucified with Christ, my hands will be crucified. Jesus' hands were crucified. A spike was driven through both hands; they were nailed to the cross. Following the resurrection, Thomas did not really believe that he was raised from the dead. And this doubting one said, "I never will believe unless I see the print of the nails in his hands; unless I take my hand and thrust it into his side and feel the great gash that was made there by the spear then I will not believe." One week later, on the Lord's day - the first day of the week - Jesus appeared to his apostles and Thomas was right there in the midst of them. Jesus invited this doubting one to come and look at the print of the nails in his hands and to take his hand and thrust it into the side

of Jesus and feel the great gash that had been left there by the spear. Thomas apparently did not have to do that for proof as he had said that it was going to have to be proven to him, because when the Lord spoke to him and invited him to do that, Thomas fell down believing and confessed his faith in the Son of God.

If I am crucified with Christ then my hands must be crucified with Jesus' hands. What does that mean? To me it means that I must be very careful what my hands handle. I must be careful that my hands are never engaged in any dishonest activity. I must be careful in daily business that my hands are always honest hands. I must be careful that my hands never handle any alcoholic beverage. I must be careful that my hands never handle any filthy literature. I must be very careful if I have crucified hands that they are used only for good purposes, to serve mankind. I must be careful that my hands are generous hands and able to reach into my pocket on every first day of the week and present with my hands God's holy tithe and love offering that the Kingdom of God may go forward.

The past couple of weeks everyone who is sports minded has been thrilled I'm sure by the 23rd Olympics in Los Angeles, California. The 23rd Olympics opened up in a magnificent, emotional way. On opening night there were giant 5-foot balloons every place. 90,000 people were in the stands in Los Angeles. 8,000 athletes gathered for the competition. A record 140 nations from all over the world sent their athletes, and they all stood together, screaming, praying and holding hands. President Reagan opened the 23rd Olympics using 16 words. After our president dramatically opened the olympics all 90,000 people, together with the 8,000 athletes reached out and they touched somebody's hand. And they all sang as they touched somebody's hand.

Reach out and touch somebody's hand. Make this world a better place if you can. It was emotional. It was beautiful to watch contestants and spectators reaching out and touching hands with music and singing as the spirit moved them. The opening ceremony of the olympics reminded me that Christians need to do that. If we are Christians; if we have been crucified with Christ, we need to reach out and touch somebody with our hand and give them a touch of love and give them a touch of help where they need it.

III. In the third place I would point out that a Christian's ears must be crucified. Paul said, I am crucified with Christ, and in a sense we would have to say that Christ had crucified ears. A crown of thorns was mashed down upon his head. A Biblical record tells us that the blood came trickling down. And as that blood trickled down from the crown of thorn upon his head we know that some of that blood ran down upon his ears. And so in that sense we would have to say that he had crucified ears. We also know that insulting hands smote him upon the head. They beat him from side to side as they shouted insulting words and said, "Prophecy, tell us who struck you, if you are really the Christ." Of course he was blindfolded and they were trying to get him to say who was hitting him as if that would prove that he was the Son of God, if he could see through the blindfold who struck him. Evidently these insulting hands beat his face into a pulp until he was unrecognizable. And so there must have been more blood and perhaps even his ears were bloodied by that beating they gave him upon the head.

Now then, our ears should also be crucified with Christ - meaning that there are voices all around us and we should be careful the voices that our ears listen to. There are always voices advising us not to do the right thing. There are voices that say "Don't go to church." Voices that say, "You're too busy to go to church." Voices that say, "You're too tired to go to church." Voices that say, "It doesn't matter about reading the Bible; you need to spend your time having a good time; don't do that; don't do this; don't go there." Always those evil voices advising us to do the wrong thing. There is always the voice of the devil saying, "put over this shady deal; nobody will find out; you can make more money; forget about what your Sunday School teacher said." And then there are always those voices of gossip; voices that run down someone else's character. Then there are those ears that like to hear these evil things and hear this evil gossip. The Bible calls them "itching ears." Now we have either itching ears that like to hear the wrong thing, or we have crucified ears that will be closed to these voices that are evil; to these voices that would cause us to turn away from Christ and the church. A Christian must have crucified ears in order to listen

only to the good and to reject the evil sounds that are all around us.

IV. I am crucified with Christ. In the fourth place, if we are, a Christian's eyes should be crucified. Jesus' eyes were crucified. As his face was battered beyond recognition some of the blood got in his eyes; even from the crown of thorns as the blood trickled down, some of the blood no doubt trickled into his eyes. And our eyes should be crucified with Christ. We must be very careful what we see. If we have crucified eyes, then we are not going to looking for the pornographic literature, pornographic films; we are not going to be looking for the bad in other people, but looking for the good. Many things appeal through the eye gate.

In the Old Testament, there is the story of Akin, the soldier in Israel's army. And as the Israelites marched into Jerico to capture the city God had given them specific instructions not to carry away any of the treasures of the city. God said that everything should be destroyed with fire. But as they marched in to capture the city, Akin, through the eye gate, saw a Babylonian garment; beautiful and costly; a wedge of gold; 200 sheckles of silver, rich treasure, and as he looked he desired. Because he looked, he took it. He sinned against God. And as a result, he was punished. He was stoned to death and burned with fire. We must be careful that our eyes are crucified eyes - eyes that will be blind to the evil all around us, but eyes that will be open to the good that we can do.

Oh how we need to use our eyes to study the different nations of the world and the needs of those nations. I wonder how many of you have been reading about the need of all the African nations - the hunger belt - the starvation belt, it is being called. Literally millions of Africans are starving to death every day. We need to open our eyes to the needs of our African brothers and sisters who need our help. How many of us have read of the needs of the Asiatic countries that need the gospel of Jesus Christ so desperately. Nepal, for example - have you ever read about the nation of Nepal where it is absolutely against the law to hand out a Bible or a religious tract, or to even speak to anybody about Jesus Christ. If you're caught even speaking a word about Jesus in Nepal the punishment is life imprisonment. We need to read about countries like that and to know their needs because Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields. They are white unto harvest but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest that they will send forth other laborers into his harvest field." If we will use our eyes to see the needs of others then we will be better able to pray that the lord of the harvest will send forth other reapers into the white harvest fields to gather in precious souls for Jesus Christ.

I read of a dream that a Christian had one time. He dreamed that he was lost in a deep, dark well - hopelessly lost and there was no way out. But down there in the darkness the Christian finally looked up - straight up as high as he could see - and he saw the sky, and one star was shining.

In his dream that star sent down a beam of light and as long as the Christian kept looking up at the star that beam of light began to lift him up out of that deep, dark well. But then the Christian looked down into the darkness and when he looked down, he fell back down in the well again.

Finally he realized that if he kept looking up then he would get out of that hopeless condition.

And that's what we must do with our eyes. We must have crucified eyes that will cause us to keep looking up to Jesus. And if we keep our eyes on Jesus at all times, He can lift us up out of the hopeless conditions of this world of sin.

V. In the fifth place, if I am crucified with Christ, then my tongue will also be crucified. In James 3rd Chapter, verses 2-8, the Bible says, "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of

mankind. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

Aren't those words of wisdom? They are words that make us think. How true it is - you can take a large, strong, powerful horse, that would easily be able to throw us or trample us to death and put a little, tiny bit in that horse's mouth and you can make him do anything. The same thing is true with the great oceanliners. There is a tiny rudder, and with that rudder you can steer that oceanliner and make it go anywhere you want it to go, even though it is so giant it is a floating city. The tongue has the same power as the bridle in the horse's mouth, or the rudder on the ship. The tongue has the same power as a fire - it is a fire if it is used in the wrong way, it is a fire of hell, the Bible says. And isn't it amazing how we can tame every kind of wild beast. We can tame the elephants and make them work for us, and the lions and the tigers. We can even tame the snakes and other reptiles. But the Bible says the tongue, no man can tame. It is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. But there is one answer for the tongue. There is one way the tongue to be tamed, and that is for the tongue to be crucified with Christ.

VI. Finally, I want to say that a Christian's heart should be crucified. If I am crucified with Christ, then my heart, like his, must be crucified. As Jesus hung there upon the cross a soldier came with a spear and he plunged it up into the heart of Jesus and the Bible says "out came water and blood," indicating that he died of a broken heart. Our hearts must be crucified with his heart.

An old Saxon warrior came to church in England one Sunday and requested that the minister baptize him. Naturally the minister was overjoyed and he agreed to baptize this soldier. But the old Saxon soldier said, "I want to be baptized all except my right arm." The preacher said that was ridiculous; if you're going to be baptized you have to be completely immersed, including your arm. And the old Saxon warrior said, "Oh, no, I want to be all baptized except this one arm, but I've got to keep this arm out of the water because I want to use this arm to fight my enemies. And the preacher of course told him that was an impossibility. We can't be baptized all except our hand. We can't be baptized all except our feet. We can't say, "Well, I'll be baptized all except for my feet and I want to keep them so that I can use them to take me to the taverns and the night clubs. That won't work. We can't say, well I want to be baptized all over except my hands and I want to keep my hands free so that I can drink beer and liquor. We can't say, well I want to be baptized all except for my ears and I want to keep them so I can listen to gossip. We can't say, I want to be baptized except for my eyes and I want to keep them so I can see the evil things of the world. We can't say I want to be baptized except for my tongue, but I want to keep my tongue free so I can gossip about everybody. No we've got to be altogether, immersed with Christ. As Romans 6, says: Buried with Christ by baptism to death, and only then will they be able to say I am crucified with Christ, altogether, completely and fully - 100%.

Back in the days of the crusaders there was a bishop who wanted to bring some of the soil of the Holy Land back to England. He wanted to put this soil in the cemetery next to the church building and there he wanted to grow some flowers. He had enough influence that he was able to secure 53 English ships. And they loaded these 53 ships with soil from Israel and they hauled it all the way back to England and the bishop took that soil and completely covered the church cemetery with it. There he planted some beautiful flowers from the Holy Land. As the winds blew, the pollen was spread all over the English countryside. Soon a brand new variety of flowers never before seen in the English countryside were everywhere - all coming from that old English cemetery. As the years went by, most people forgot where the flowers came from. Just a few of the old timers remembered, and when any newcomer would say in the springtime, "Where did those beautiful flowers come from?" The old timers would say, "They came from Calvary." Because they remembered that they had been brought over with that soil from the Holy Land.

May God help each and every one of us to be crucified with Christ - totally crucified with Christ. So that when people see the way we live, hear our speech - when people see the practices that we are engaged in - they will say, "Well, he came from Calvary." That leads me to ask in conclusion, friend, "Have you been to Calvary? Have you been crucified with Christ? Have you

made that full and complete surrender to the Son of God? If not, would you do it tonight. We are singing this invitation, just praying that somebody who needs Jesus will take advantage of this moment and step forward and give your life to Him.

In closing I want you to think about Big Tom and Little Jim. This public school was having trouble getting a teacher because some over grown boys in the school would run each teacher off upon his arrival. The boys had not passed in their classes for several years. So the school board decided they would advertize in a national pub. for a teacher. Only one man responded to the ad. He was very small in stature and scrawny looking.

Upon his arrival the school board explained the situation. No teacher had ever lasted over three days. The teacher accepted the challenge anyway. On the first day of school, when he arrived several of the big boys were at the steps waiting for him. The teacher greeted them all with a cheerful hello. But the response of the kids was very ugly.

After the teacher went into the class room. Big Tom who was the bully of the entire school said to the rest of the boys, "He's not very big, I can whip him by myself!"

The bell rang, and all the students went inside the classroom. All classes met in the same room. The students were cutting up and making trouble before they sat down in their seats. When the teacher stood before them, he declared, "It's time for school to start, but before we can start the classes, we must have some rules. And he really got their attention when he said, "I will let you make the rules!" The students couldn't believe it. "We get to make the rules? One of the students declared. "Yes!" The teacher responded. Then one of the students said, "Since we get to make the rules, I would like a rule that nobody can steal because my lunch has been stolen several times from under my desk!" "OK" The teacher said, and with a piece of chalk in his hand, he wrote the first rule on the blackboard.

"OK" The teacher said, "What other rules do you want?" Another student said, "Let's have a rule of no more cheating!" Another said, "No more lying!" An on until they had ten rules on the blackboard.

Then the teacher said, "We must have a way to enforce these rules. What do you suggest?" One of the studentssaid, "Whoever breaks one of these rules should get ten stripes with a green switch with their coat taken off!" The teacher said, "That's very severe isn't it?" "No they all said together! Any one who break one ofthese rules. Should have ten stripes should get a whippin with their coat taken off!" The teacher said, "OK! YOu are making the rules, you must go by them!"

Everything went ok for three of four days. But on the third day during the lunch hour, Big Tom, the bully of the school came rushing into the teacher pounding on the desk with his fist and said, "Some one stole my lunch, someone stole my lunch, get him in here, give him his ten strips with his coat taken off or I will beat him up myself." The teacher said, "Hold on Big Tom, we will take care of it when the lunch hour is over." At the end of the lunch hour, all of the students came in quietly and sat down in their seats. Then the teacher stood before them and said, "A fewdays ago, we made ten rules, and you said

any body who broke one of these rules would get ten strips with their coat taken off, today, Big Tom says, someone stole his lunch whoever it is, come forward now, take off your coat and take your whippin like a man." There was silence, no one moved, the teacher said, "Come on up, whoever you are, and take your whippin. You helped make these rules, now you must go by them."

Soon a small kid who was called "Little Jim" got up out of his seat, and slowly started coming forward. Everyone was in shock. No one could believe that Little Jim would do that. The teacher was in shock too. But the teacher said, "Little Jim, you helped make these rules, now you must take your whippin. Take off your coat, bend over this desk and take your whippin!" Little Jim looked up at the teacher and said, "Sir, please don't make me take off my coat. You can give me twenty stripes but please don't make me take off my coat."

The teacher said, "Little Jim, you must take off your coat. You helped make the rules." Little Jim fumbled at the big pin that held his jacket together. Soon he took off his coat, then everyone saw why he didn't want to take off his coat. He had on no shirt. Little Jim looked up at the teacher and said, "Sir I only have one shirt, and my mama was washing clothes today so I had to leave it with her. We are very poor. My sister and I take turns bringing lunch to school. My Mother takes in washing and ironing for us to have something to eat."

Everyone thought surly the teacher would not whip Little Jim now but the teacher said, "Little Jim, bend over the desk, you broke the rules, you must take your punishment." Little Jim bent over the desk, and got ready to take his whippin. But about that time, there was a big commotion, Big Tom came rushing down the aisle and shouting to the teacher, "Stop, Stop Teacher don't you dare whip Little Jim" The teacher responded, "Big Tom, he broke one of the rules, he must be punished." But Big Tom said, "Teacher, can I take Little Jim whippin for him?" The teacher responded, "I suppose so Big Tom, the punishment would still be given!" SO big Tom took off his coat, bent over the desk and the teacher gave him ten strips with a big green switch. the whelps rose up on his back. Big Tom raised up from the desk. Everyone was in shock. Little Jim came running to him and through his arms around him and said, "Thank you, thank you thank you Big Tom for taking my whippin for me, I'm so sorry I stole your lunch but I was so hungry. Thank you big Tom for taking my whippin for me."

Now let this picture fade from your mind and let another picture come upon your heart. That's what Jesus did for us upon the cross. We sinned, we broke God's rules many times. But Jesus took our whippin for us. On that cross He went to hell in our place. May God help us to be like little Jim. In grateful appreciation may we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ because GOD DOES DESERVE OUR BEST.

A message delivered by Evangelist Reggie Thomas at the 96th National Convention of the Philippines at Ilo Ilo..