

Back on the farm, we used to have this old Austin truck. Dad had picked it up from a clearing sale for almost nothing (probably because it had no brakes)... But it wasn't at all what it appeared. It looked old and clapped out, and the timber on the tray was falling apart. But man, it used to go (at least it went a lot better than you needed it to go without brakes). You see, the previous owner had re-powered it. They'd pulled out whatever engine it used to have, and replaced it a much bigger, and much more modern UD engine.

*It always started *** just like that, and that engine would never skip-a-beat. That truck, was not at all, what it used to be... The old engine had died, but then it came alive again, with a completely new engine.*

That's an imperfect example, of the transformation that takes place in disciples of Jesus... And that's what Paul is talking about today, and he's sharing in a very personal way.

In the Bible reading this morning, to set the context, we re-read a few verses that we covered last week. So, let's have a brief re-cap.

The Jewish way of mind, saw themselves as the righteous children of Abraham (and why wouldn't they – they were God's chosen people). And they had God's Covenantal Law, to help them to **live** as God's covenant people....

But of course, that meant the **non-Jews** – the Gentiles – well, they were sinners,,, because they **weren't** the righteous

children of Abraham; And they were **ignorant** of God's Covenantal Law...

But when the Gospel of Jesus Christ was preached, and the **Gentiles** came to faith (under this new covenant of 'grace'), a group that we now call "the Judaisers", went to Gentile churches, and tried to convince them that, "If you want to be a Christian, you have to also keep the requirements of the Old Covenant religious law.

And these were influential people, who even Peter was afraid of. And so Peter pulled back from fellowshiping with the Gentiles, and eating with the Gentiles...

And the Apostle Paul reminds them, that even the Jews aren't saved by works of the Law, and the only way, any of us can be justified, is by faith in Christ Jesus.

And something I didn't mention last week, was the way the Judaisers seemed to select only 2 particular issues (what foods you were/weren't allowed to eat & circumcision). And it actually made it an 'ethnic issue'... Many of the Jews (in common with the Gentiles) failed to keep **lots** of God's laws,,, but they chose the 2, that set them apart (as a people) from the gentiles... And they made that an issue.

And it went completely against the Gospel message that Paul had received/was preaching. At one time, Paul would've completely agreed with them. There was nobody more zealous for the Law than what Paul was.

Before he was saved, Paul had trained to be a Pharisee. The reason he persecuted Christians, was because he believed The Law required it. Which is what he means in V19, when he said ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

It was when Paul was in the full heat for his zeal for The Law, that he encountered Christ... And Jesus arrested Him there on that road to Damascus, and Paul would never be the same again. He died to The Law, that day... He realised that his zealousness for The Law, was the one thing responsible for the **greatest** of sin – to reject Christ, and to persecute Christ...

And so, for Paul, he had to repent of The Covenantal Religious Law, that drove Him to reject Jesus... He died to the Law...

But **now**, the Judaisers are saying, “By **not** keeping the Covenantal Law, you’re sinning...”

And Paul rejects that outright, and he shows them the absurdity of their argument:

Alright:

- You can't be justified by keeping The Covenantal Religious Law.
 - We are justified in Christ.
 - But then, you say “By choosing Christ instead of The Law, you’re sinning”
 - What? Does that mean Christ promotes sin???
- Certainly not!!!**

Do you see what's happening??? The issue at hand, is getting rid of our sin. That is humanity's greatest problem – “How can I get rid of sin – be free from sin, so that I can be justified before God???” And through the death and resurrection of Christ, it has been made possible, to kneel before our Lord, confess our sin, ask for forgiveness, and He so thoroughly forgives us – He washes us clean... And there we stand, Justified in Christ – something the Covenantal Law could never do....

And that's totally acceptable to God, because by God's plan and purpose, that's the **only** way to **be** saved – that's the only way to **be** justified. That's what grace is...

But I want you to be aware, that that sort of grace – that immense grace that God gives to us, such that we can be justified through faith in Christ,,,,, **others** will think that it's simply 'outrageous'... You can't **possibly** be justified by God:

- you have to add to it;
- Pay the penance;
- Work harder;
- Give more;
- Do more;
- “have the anointing” – you can't be saved and set free unless you have the anointing....
- You have to have a particular spiritual gift, otherwise you're not saved...

Others may see the grace of God as ‘simply outrageous’, but how about you and I make a pact right now, that we never yield to man, who can’t handle the immense grace of God...

Paul actually says, ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

You see, God’s means of salvation in Christ, made it possible for both Jew and Gentile, to be saved/one... No longer made distinct/kept separate, by ethnic or Covenantal Legal boundaries...

And if Paul was to back away from full fellowship with the gentiles, he would be **undoing** everything that Christ died to achieve. And that would be ‘unthinkable’. He said that it would prove him to be a transgressor (wrong-doer).

¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

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At this point, he makes one of the most profound statements, explaining the turn-around that **he** experienced, and the turnaround that we experience, when we become a disciple of Jesus.. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

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Could we ever plumb the depths of what that means???

This verse expresses, the radical nature of what it means to become a Christian. You see, when you become a Christian:

- you don't just add Jesus to your existing life;
- it's not even about "God transforming (and Christianising) our lives";
- It's not about us being essentially the same people, but just made a bit nicer;
- it's not about us being essentially the same people, but instead of being 'unsaved', we're 'saved'

To become a Christian, is such a radical transformation, Jesus described it as being "born again";

For us to be identified with Christ, it's no longer **we** who live. We are **crucified with Christ**.

Has anyone here, ever had a terrible experience of living with a really bad flatmate??? Some of you have probably at some time lived with a flatmate from Hell, but if you haven't, imagine this:

- *Imagine that you're a really tidy person, and you keep the house all in spick-&-span order;*
 - *flatmate takes off his dirty socks and leaves them on the kitchen bench;*
- *You've got all the ingredients in the fridge, ready to cook dinner for some friends on Saturday night;*
 - *and Friday night your flatmate uses them and doesn't tell you;*

- *Their dog chews on the furniture (when you insisted “No pets”)*
- *car breaks down & parks the wreck in the front yard;*
- *plays rap & doof-doof music so loud you can’t even hear yourself think;*
- *they never clean the toilet...*

Have you got the picture? – Flatmate from hell...

That’s what it would be like, if Jesus moved into my life, and I still lived here...

Alright, “being saved”, isn’t merely a spiritual experience. It isn’t something you do outside of your body.

If Jesus moved in, to live inside the old Michael, I would be the flatmate from hell, for Jesus... Are you with me? It’s probably easier for you to imagine me being the flatmate from hell, than yourself. When Jesus moves into my life:

- He doesn’t want to live with Michael’s decor;
- filth;
- and overall offensiveness...

And if you don’t agree that before you were saved, you were offensive to God, then:

- you don’t understand the broken sinfulness of humanity; and
- why the Gospel is such good news; and
- you won’t understand how much God truly loves us...

Even though our overwhelming sinfulness was so offensive to the Son of God, His love is far greater. He loved us so much, that He gave Himself for us – He died for us, so that He could remove the offence.

And so when we become a Christian, the old self dies. The old Michael dies, and Christ moves in to live... Alright, so it's not Jesus, trying to share the space with the old sinful Michael, because the old sinful Michael, is nailed to the cross with Christ, and Christ lives in me...

And so Paul says, **And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

Living as a Christian – it's a very physical thing. Our soul doesn't race off to be with the Lord. The Spirit of Christ, lives in our physical (fleshly) bodies. Your body, will still have the same physical limitations it always had. At times, your body will:

- get sick;
- get injured;
- get old;
- it will die (unless [God willing] Jesus returns before then)...

That's why, in his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, Paul talks about how we have a treasure in jars of clay. What's the treasure? Christ living in us. What's the jar of clay? These fragile, earthly, fleshly bodies that we have...

Alright, now that's easy enough to understand, isn't it??? Our current bodies are fragile and weak... But they carry a treasure. They carry Christ.

And the life we now live (on this earth), we live by faith in the Son of God...

What does that mean??? Well, to live by faith, it means a lot-a-stuff. But in the context of today's reading, I just want to share 3 things:

1.

Firstly, to live by faith in the Son of God, means we will live differently – we will live by the Spirit (& Paul will get to that by the end of this letter) If our old self is crucified, and Christ is now living in us, I'd better not pull the old Michael down off the cross again, and once again, become the flatmate-from-hell for Jesus... We live by the Spirit of God, in all righteousness.

And I don't know about you, but it happens to me:

Sometimes I realise that I have allowed the old Michael, to wiggle down off the cross. And instead of letting Christ live in me, I start living for myself. And that's sin... Thank God, I can repent, confess my ongoing sin, and Christ forgives me...

So, to live by faith in the Son of God, means we will live differently.

2.

A 2nd thing it means, is we fix our eyes on eternity. Whenever Paul speaks of our fleshly bodies, we always know that in the back of his mind, there's a converse to this – the Spiritual bodies we'll have at the resurrection...

You know, many people (who claim to be Christians), live as if this life, is the main thing, and as if our fleshly bodies, are the most important thing we have... And some people focus all of their faith on this current earthly, fleshly life, and try and increase the blessings in this life... That wasn't the way of Paul, or the way of Jesus...

If Christ lives in us, and if Christ lived sacrificially, guess how we will live. If Christ is living in us, we certainly won't be clinging to this life.

And so, to live by faith in the Son of God, we fix our eyes on eternity, and the life to come, in glory with Christ.

3.

But the 3rd thing, and the most important thing in the context of today's reading, is that to live by faith in the Son of God, means we trust **entirely** in Christ for our salvation, and we don't let the Old Covenantal Religious Law prevent us from fellowshiping with other Christians of different physical and ethnic backgrounds...

We are all one in Christ.

And so Paul concludes in V21: ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

You know, a lot of people today believe they don't need Jesus, because they're "good people"... Seriously??? That means Christ died for no purpose.

Not even Israel (the chosen people of God), keeping the covenantal law, were saved through that...

Christ did die for a purpose... He did it with a passion, and He did it with a purpose. What was the passion?

Well, I'm going to break your heart here... A common gospel is Jesus couldn't live without you and needed you.... no he didn't. He just loved you. And isn't that a whole lot better?

The Passion; and the Purpose...

The Passion, is the love that Jesus has for you and I. It's not that we are so wonderful that He couldn't possibly live without us. It's because He loves us so much... That's the passion...

And the purpose was to restore all who turn their hearts to Jesus, to a position of righteousness that the Covenantal Law could never achieve.

Now, I'm going to ask the question today:

Are you justified? Are you made right and holy, before God?

Not sure?

Has your old self died? Have you crucified your old self, to be born again?

Have you asked Jesus to come inside, and live as the Lord of your life?

If not, let's do that now...

Heavenly Father,
we thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ,
who loved us so much,
that while we were still sinners,
and not just minor offenders,
but sinners who rejected You...
While we were offensive sinners,
Jesus loved us so much, He died for us.

Lord, I recognise that my old self
– my old way of living,
was so offensive, and so far from Your will,
that there was no way I could become righteous
without Your intervention.

And so, I thank You Jesus,
that You died on the cross for me.

Lord, please put to death,

my old sinful self,
and come into my life to live.

And Lord, help me to live this new life you've given me,
to God.

Day by Day, help me to follow You,
Always yielding to You;
Always submitting to You;
Always loving You;
Forever worshipping You;
And always being a witness to You,
before the world.

In Jesus' Name,
Amen.