

DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

JUNE 2025 | GALATIANS 2:19-21

*For through the law
I died to the law, so
that I might live to
God. I have been cru-
cified with Christ. It is
no longer I who live,
but Christ who lives in
me.*

Galatians 2:19-20a

NO LONGER I

The epidemic of loneliness is affecting more and more people. Surveys reveal that loneliness and stress are at an all time high, even considering times of war and economic depression that we've been through. Doing life alone is not working. And even Christians are beset with the frustration of trying to follow principles only to find that they often don't work as advertised. *"It just doesn't work!"* cries the desperate religionist who has added the Christian ethic to his or her to-do list. *"I've honestly tried!"* bemoans the sincere church-goer who cycles between self-affirmation and self-loathing.

The implication is that God's way is insufficient to meet the longing of the wounded heart. Maybe the problem is that we have redefined "Christian living" to mean "living conscious only of self while trying to be good." Sadly, many believers live functionally like atheists: God does not exist in the daily - He might be at church or in some secluded retreat center, but self is the only person who is always in the room.

Biblical illiteracy has spawned an ignorance of the Law. We insist on working on things we do to make us better. We have been graciously

saved by the grace of God, knowing we had nothing to do with His love for us. But often we then turn from Jesus - the only person in the room to gain the blessings of obedience to the demands of moral law - to self and self-improvement. Good at acts of contrition and renewed commitment, self-will is looked to as the savior. But it simply is not strong enough-ever! The apostle Paul makes it clear that the law, both written and imprinted in creation, renders us helpless to be righteous. It reveals that we are sick beyond recovery, and our only hope is death. We have been scarred, rejected, detached, deprived, abused, left fatherless, and abandoned by mother. We have a warped perspective and a sin-sick soul. When we embrace the transactional message of religion, we have an imitation Christianity. We have doctrine without Spirit and discipline without love. Alone in the room of our conscience, without any intimacy with the resurrected and living Christ, we struggle with discouragement and despair.

If someone else is added to our company in this state, we will inevitably drain them dry, seeking to find

the affirmation and validation that only the living Christ can provide. Spouses, children, friends, and counselors become our source for healing and restoration. Smothered by the demands of the sin-sick, isolated soul, loved ones drift away, unable to satisfy the pressure to be a god. But, there is hope! The apostle Paul gave the gospel solution:

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. 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. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Galatians 2:19-21, ESV

At first glance it seems that Paul is confused and unsure about who is living his life. But, if we look further, we see that he is describing the great mystery of the gospel. Jesus has again done for us what we have tried to do on our own. When we

were lost, He initiated the rescue. When we were blind, He gave sight. When we were sick unto death, He died a death that sufficed for Him and for us. We died with him. And, we were raised with Him from the dead. We are ascended with Him to the right hand of God. We share His life - past, present, and future. There is a balm in Gilead that makes the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul. That balm is the life of Christ that is shared with those who believe in Jesus as Lord. Our debt has been paid. Our aloneness has been displaced by His very presence. Now we can **live to God**. Before we could only live to ourselves whether in self-deluded arrogance or in self-loathing disdain. Now we have been reconciled to God.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are

ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21, ESV

Restored humanity lives in the conscious presence of God. The first humans walked and talked with God daily. God initiated a conversation with Abram to begin a life-long relationship. God had Israel to build Him a tent among theirs as they journeyed through the wilderness. He met with their representatives in the Holy of Holy in the temple. Life with God means living in His presence, sharing in His purpose and plan. In fact, the greatest judgment that comes on humans is losing the presence of God. Israel became so corrupt that the presence of God left the temple in the days of Ezekiel. Jesus prayed that the cup of wrath that would separate Him from the Father would pass. Considering all this, how foolish is it that we try to live as Christians without a consciousness of His presence?

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul prayed for the believers to be strengthened in their inner being so that Christ might be at home in their hearts (see *Ephesians 3:14-19*). In other words—that Christ would be real to them at all times. He went on to pray that they would be consciously aware of how big, wide, long and deep the love of Christ really is. The more believers are aware of being loved, the more we are transformed by His power. The room of our heart is filled with God Himself. There is no longer a need to obsess with self. Every cry of the human heart is satisfied by His presence. His work on the cross made this possible. It is not enough to believe that He lived, died, and ascended. It was all so that we could live to God. We have the confidence of His pleasure. We are released from making others our gods. We don't need to pump up our image, and there is no ground for self-loathing.

There is an important word in Paul's prayer for believers in Ephesians: "that he may *grant* you..." (see *Ephesians 3:16*). It's all a gift. You can't attain a sufficient level to merit His presence. You can't get closer

by some act of devotion. He gives you the power to know Him personally and presently. As children, we ask for our hearts to be aware of His love. As the Father, He gladly grants the request. Living without being aware of His constant presence, for whatever reason, is insulting to the grace of God. He has done everything necessary for us to enjoy Him as His children and His partners in redemption.

It is no longer I! I still live, but the source of my life is the life of Christ who is at home in my heart. I am crucified, resurrected, and ruling WITH HIM.

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