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A1006 – February 7, 2010 – Galatians 2:15-21 – Crucified With Christ

Alright, let's turn to Gal 2. We've started on Paul's argument for justification by faith over and against justification by works of the Law. Today Paul is going to take the same principles over to sanctification. Remember that justification is an imputation of value, a pricing system. Man is at -1 because of the Fall and no matter how many good works we do or how much law keeping we can never move an inch toward +1. It requires an external righteousness and that righteousness was generated by the Lord Jesus Christ. It's His righteousness that is valued at +1 and when we believe in Him we are seen in Him and so our value is moved to +1. That's the beginning of the Christian life. That is not because of righteousness inside our hearts, that's because of Christ's righteousness outside our heart. It has nothing to do with our hearts; it has everything to do with Christ's death and resurrection.

After this we move into sanctification and sanctification does have to do with our hearts. Sanctification is learning loyalty to God through His word. But the point Paul makes today is that this too has nothing to do with works, it has everything to do with faith in the content of Scripture. So if we think of justification as faith in the content of the gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then we think of sanctification as faith in the content of the rest of Scripture and its implications. So it's an enlargement of the content. Faith in the content of the gospel justified, faith in the content of the rest of Scripture sanctifies.

We've been working with Gal 2:15-17, a very Jewish argument and in this argument I've mentioned categories of thinking. Everyone uses categories to think. You have to have categories to think. When God built the creation He

built it in categories, light, darkness, water, land, birds, fish, animal, man, etc...And God built man to categorize things under His ever watchful eye. That's what Adam was doing in Gen 2 with the animals. Some animal would come forward and Adam would say, that's a dog, another animal would come along, that's a cat. He was classifying things and that gave him a vocabulary so he could think. You can't think without categories, so he made distinctions between this animal and that animal and there could be rational discussion about animals. There's nothing wrong with classifying things, underneath the authority of Scripture, it's having dominion. It's when man steps out from underneath God's authority and says I will be the namer, I will classify all things on the basis of my finite autonomous intellect. So that's why it's so important that we have Bible study. Bible study gives us the basic categories of thinking and inside that, fine, we can get into the minutia, but once we've violated those basic categories and we've said we're the namers and our categories are absolute then we have a problem.

And the Jews had a little category problem in the 1st century. You can see it embedded in Gal 2:15, **We are Jews by birth and not sinners from among the Gentiles.** Their way of thinking is that you had two groups distinguished by whether they were sinners or righteous. Gentiles were sinners, Jews were righteous. Heck, they thought if you were born a Jew you were instantly in the kingdom and I imagine if you were a Gentile and you converted to Judaism you could get in by the hair of your chinny-chin or something. But that was the basic way of thinking.

And Paul says in verse 17 we got that straightened out. We found out that was wrong thinking. He says **if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners.** And boy did they ever find out they were **sinners.** Think of Paul's situation. Paul was the perfect Pharisee, got A's on all his tests and not only that, he wrote the rule book for persecuting Christians and all the time he was out arresting and murdering Christians he thought he was doing the will of God. He thought he was getting brownie points with God. What did he find out? He found out he was chief among sinners. So boy, you better believe he found out he was a sinner. So yeah, they found out they were sinners. You know, that's something you've got to figure out. If you don't figure out you're a sinner and you're constantly excusing yourself: my mommy dropped me on my head, my genetics, I'm a victim. If that's the mentality you can't come to Christ. You first have to

recognize you have a problem that you are responsible for. And we wonder why we're having such a hard time getting people to come to Christ these days. We're having a hard time because these people think they're victims. And as long as I'm just a victim I'm not responsible for my sin. So we have this pervasive pattern in our society. They had it in Jewish society in the 1st century in a bit different way. Hey, we're Jews, we don't have a problem, we're God's chosen people, therefore we're going to heaven, got an automatic ticket. And Paul says that idea came crashing down. The ticket doesn't come through your circumcision, the ticket comes through faith.

But in the Jewish mind they weren't ready to abandon their categories just yet, When Christ came they said, aha, if we're sinners then it must be because you're **Christ is a minister of sin**. That was their rationale for not believing in Christ. Christ just made more sinners, if he'd stayed away we would have remained righteous, so your Christ is a minister of sin. Paul says that's baloney, it's not Christ's coming that made us sinners, we were sinners all along. It was our stupid categories that blinded us to the fact we were sinners. So Christ isn't a minister of sin, we were already sinners. And the Law showed us that. If we had been honest to the Law we would have to admit that the Law condemned us.

So in verse 18 he goes to prove it. He goes to prove it sort of in two parts, verse 18 and verse 19; Christ is no minister of sin. He does not aid and abet us in sin. Christ is a minister of righteousness. It is the Law that is a minister of sin. And he launches into it in verse 18. Notice the pronoun **I**, you see it all the way to the end of the chapter, **I, I, I**. Don't over-personalize the **I** as if it only has to do with Paul. It does have to do with Paul but it doesn't only have to do with Paul. The point of the **I** here is to put yourself in the **I**, that's the point. You're supposed to personalize the text at this point. Verse 18, **For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor**. Now, what is this rebuilding bit? Here's the original text, a very formal translation, **For if these which I destroyed I build again, I prove myself to be a transgressor**. What are **these which I destroyed**? **These** are the Laws of Moses. It's a figure of speech, they didn't literally destroy the law of Moses, but the point is you once lived under the house of these

Laws of Moses, you heard about Christ and His righteousness, so you realized you were bankrupt living in the house of the Law of Moses, you were guilty,

so you came out of the house of the Law of Moses, tore it down and resorted to faith in Christ, you were justified. Then some time passes. You rebuild the house of the Law of Moses and move back in the house putting yourself under the Law. Now that's a perfect sketch of what Peter had done. Peter had been trying to establish his own righteousness by following the Law of Moses, then Christ came, he rejected the Law as a means of righteousness and he resorted to faith in Christ. Then what did he do here at Antioch? He, in essence, rebuilt the house of the Law and moved back into the house of the Law, separating from Gentiles. And Paul says you therefore prove, one way or another, that you are **a transgressor**. There's no way around his logic. "One way or another, someone who builds up what he formerly demolished acknowledges his fault, explicitly in his former demolition or implicitly in his present rebuilding. If the one activity was right, the other must be wrong."¹ Let's say I destroy the Law of Moses, admitting that it's not the way to righteousness. But then I come along later and rebuild the Law of Moses, I now say it is the way to righteousness. Well, that's an admission that I was wrong to begin with and I never should have torn it down. Or, if I don't admit it was wrong to tear it down then I prove myself to be wrong by rebuilding it. So I'm wrong either way.

Verse 19, further proof and also introduction to verse 20 **For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God**. Now what he's saying, let me give you a real formal translation, all I'm going to do is move the **I** closer to the beginning of the sentence to give you the full effect. **For I through the Law died to the Law**, purpose clause, **so that I might live to God**. Implication: if I don't die to the Law, I can't live to God. It's that simple. Verse 19 is describing cause-effect in the spiritual realm. There is cause-effect in the physical realm and there is cause-effect in the spiritual realm. The cause here is I died to Law, the effect is I live to God. These are exclusive of one another. There is no way to live by the Law and live to God. It's simply impossible. Now it may sound strange to you for someone to say I died so I could live, but it hinges on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So we want to understand the principles of death and life. All human beings are dead in sin. That is something Peter and Paul came to know. We said in verse 17 that the Jews came to know that they were sinners like the Gentiles. And verse 20 is telling us how they came to know. They came to know **through the Law**. Here's how it works: the Jews had this thing called the Law, the Law is a standard and Paul says through the standard of the

Law I died. In other words, Paul had all these Laws to follow; laws related to diet, laws related to sanitation, laws related to property rights, laws related to worship, laws related to the heart, things like Rom 7 where Paul says the Law says, Thou shalt not covet. Now how are you going to police that? Thou shalt not covet is not exactly a public crime, it's a private crime, it's a crime of the heart. And Paul admitted that when I read the Law and I seriously look at these personal laws addressed to my heart, I know I fall short of the standard and so he's saying in verse 19 that the Law showed me my sin, the Law revealed to me that I was a sinner. The Law was righteous, holy and good, it was a perfect standard, and I didn't meet the perfect standard. And if I didn't meet the perfect standard then, by definition, I'm a sinner and that means I'm dead. The Law showed me I was dead because what is the cause of death? Sin. Sin is always the cause of death; sin is the cause of every kind of death, whether it be spiritual death or physical death. There is no death apart from sin. Which is why we are so insistent that the Lord Jesus Christ didn't have any sin. And we have pseudo-Christians saying and preaching in pulpits the idea that we're not really sure Christ was without sin. Well, if He wasn't without sin why are we worshipping Him? Why are we trusting in Him. If all He did on the cross was just die like anybody else, what's so special about him. The whole point is He wasn't dying for His sin. What did Christ say? Does anyone accuse Me of sin? Answer, silence. They knew they didn't have any dirt on Jesus. And so when He's dying on the cross He's not dying for our sin. He's dying for our sin. He voluntarily took that upon Himself. So Paul says, **through the Law I died to the Law** means that the Law revealed that I was a sinner and sin causes death. So therefore the Law's function was to reveal sin. Now Paul says, **I might live to God**, there's the effect. You cannot live to God under the Law because it does not give life. So if you're trying to follow the Ten Commandments to please God, like Seventh Day Adventism, you can't live to God. All the Law does is show you over and over ad nauseum you're dead in sin, you're dead in sin, you're dead in sin. Therefore something's got to happen that you might live to God and verse 20 is the explanation of what must happen

Gal 2:20, and here we move into one of those famous verses. If you've been in Christian circles for long and you've done Scripture memory work, here's one you probably memorized. What Paul is going to do now is he's going to move from justification to sanctification. He moves from the +1, -1 question to the question of spiritual growth. And he does so in a seamless fashion. Why does

he do this? It's almost like there's no break, he just slides from justification over to sanctification. Reason: justification and sanctification occur by the same means, they are both by faith. So let's read. **For I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.** Now this is a magnificent verse. This verse is rich with truth and so we want to dig into it. First let's do the exegetical route, then we'll go into theology because we want to elaborate how Paul thought about Christ and the cross. It's a monumental way of thinking about Christ and the cross. And it's a way not well understood by most Christians. He develops it in his epistles. So just be prepared for what this opens up. This is not trivial. This is big. But exegesis first.

For I have been crucified with Christ...have been is the perfect tense, it means past completed action with ongoing results. He was crucified with Christ at the moment of faith in Christ, at the moment of justification. Romans 6 adds that he was buried with Christ and resurrected with Christ. So the co-crucifixion, co-burial and co-resurrection of the believer with Christ. This is talking about the I, the ego, the self, the old man, this is not necessarily speaking about the sin nature, the sin nature is something different. And we'll talk more about that when we get in Romans. Galatians is basics and what is basic to understand is that the old man, the old I was crucified with Christ at the moment of faith and now my identity is no longer in Adam, but in Christ. And that is how we are to reckon ourselves, as dead to the old man and the old lifestyle and alive to the new man and the new lifestyle. That's basic theology. So I have been crucified with Christ is speaking of the identity of the believer with Christ. **And I no longer live,** that's the old man, the old man is dead, **but Christ lives in me,** not mystical, people like Theodoret in church history have said, well, Christ lives in me and Christ is the truth so I find the truth in me, the Bible is no longer necessary to find truth, I look to the inner light of reason. Question: how did you know the truth was in you? From this verse. Alright, then you didn't get it from the inner light of reason, you got it from the Bible. So we're back to the Bible. Obviously that interpretation won't work. All Paul means is explained when he says, **the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...** So the point is that as Paul lives by faith then Christ's life is manifest through Paul's life because Paul is living out the Scriptures and the

Scriptures you can never quite separate from Christ. Christ is the word incarnate, the Scriptures are the word, they're linked. So as I live by faith Christ is manifesting himself through me. Now, we want to spend the rest of the time on the content of faith. Faith always must have content. You can't just believe. Believe what? There has to be something. That something is content. And the content is summed up by Paul as **the Son of God who loved Me and gave Himself up for me**. Or he put it earlier, Christ and Him crucified, that's the content of Paul's faith, a very powerful, all-encompassing concept. It's not rinky dink, it's not that Paul just sat there and thought about how Roman crucifixion all day, that's not what this expression is talking about.

Turn to Gal 6:14, just so you see in the same book Paul depicts Christ and Him crucified as monumental, look at this verse. One of the most powerful verses in all Scripture. **But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.** You want to talk about that which separates Paul from the surrounding world system. Try this one. Christ is in total opposition to the world system. By the world system we mean the system that is organized in principle against God and His Christ. The world system is not the friend of Christ. So try as you may to live so that you have Jesus and the world and you want to have both. Forget it. The world system that surrounds us, that we are enmeshed in, is a total system that is at enmity with Christ. And Paul recognized that and he says, therefore, logical conclusion the world system has been crucified to me, and I have been crucified to the world system. Paul says I live in another system, the system of the Lord Jesus Christ. So just realize that whatever the cross of Christ is all about, it is everything.

Second, turn to 1 Cor 2:2, another very powerful verse on Christ and Him crucified. We don't have time to go into all this encompasses; right now we're just testing to see how all encompassing this expression is for Paul. In verse 1 he's saying I didn't come to you on the presuppositions of the world system. That wasn't my starting point. In verse 2 he tells them his ultimate presupposition, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Paul "determined" this, in other words he made a conscious effort to construct the proper way of knowing things. What we're involved in here is the question of knowing, how do we know things. How do

we know what is true? A cursory reading of this might give you the impression that all Paul ever did was run around telling Jesus stories. It does not mean that. What it means is that Paul never made any claim to know anything apart from revelation. He never got involved in an argument concerning truth independent from Scripture. This was never allowed. This means that Paul would never have said that I know X, Y, Z facts of history or that $3 + 3 = 6$, and I know these things independently of God and His revelation. Paul simply would not have accepted this. The reason is that Paul was an evangelist, he had to win people to Jesus Christ, and if you are going to start by saying that the non-Christian has genuine knowledge, knowledge that he has on some principle, independently of Scripture, then the gospel is reduced to simply additional information. As if you can just add Jesus alongside all your other authorities. If Jesus is not above all other authorities then no challenge has been made. This is an absolutely elementary point. If we are going to permit the non-believer on his autonomous base to claim the knowledge that $3+3=6$. Oh yes, he can say that $3+3=6$, but as far as these 3 units are concerned...What sustains the independence of these units? What holds these units together so that they stay the same and so that I can rely on their stability tomorrow? What keeps 3 from turning into 4? How can I rely on them and deduce rigorous mathematical formulas to discover how the universe is structured? Once we permit mathematics to be taught in the classroom without mentioning God and his revelation then we have reduced Christianity to simple addition. Just add Jesus to your other knowledge. Just add Jesus and you'll get salvation. Jesus isn't the water you add to the Kool-Aid packet. Paul isn't saying that, Paul is saying Jesus is everything and without him you have nothing; believer or unbeliever it makes no difference, He's everything.

Turn to Col 2:8. This is to believers. So this is written to people inside the Christian life, in this difficult time where we struggle to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. How does Paul instruct? "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." Notice how there are two opposing presuppositions of how we think in this verse. We're being warned against one way and encouraged in the other. You can think according to the traditions of men, according to the world system or according to Christ. And Paul's saying if you start with man as autonomous as your base and work out then you've had it,

because the world's way of knowing has no answer for how we can know anything at all. Again, we're not saying unbelievers can't buy a gallon of milk at HEB. We're simply saying that they can't give a justification for how they can do that. Sure, they love to buy milk, but only Christianity can justify why the milk exists, where the stability comes from so we can buy it, where value comes from, why value remains stable, what keeps it all working. So we're being commanded here by Paul to determine in our hearts not to know anything apart from Christ. He goes on to explain why in v 9, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," and there he's getting into why this is so. Van Til writes, "It is Christ as God who speaks in the Bible. Therefore the Bible does not appeal to human reason as ultimate in order to justify what it says. It comes to the human being with absolute authority...The two systems, that of the non-Christian and that of the Christian, differ because of the fact that their basic assumptions, or presuppositions differ." It simply has nothing to do with evidence; it has everything to do with authority, who is the authority. Either you presuppose that the Lord is the authority or you presuppose that man is the authority.

Now turn to 2 Cor 10:5. Another very powerful portrayal of the Christ by Paul. "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,". You might say this verse is saying there's a war going on for the Christian mind. And you'd be right, there are speculations and lofty objections that autonomous man raises up against the knowledge of God. Paul says we take every thought captive to Christ. That means to be loyal to Him we must submit every idea, every thought to His authority, whether it's a geological idea, a biological idea, an artistic idea, a musical idea, all ideas must be subjected to the Scriptures. Christ as God speaks with absolute authority to every area of life, every subject.

Lastly, Col 2:3. This is all giving us content for how far reaching the Scriptures are. If Christ is to live in us by faith then we've got to have Christ's content in our heart, our mind, if we don't His life can't be manifest through us in these areas. We've been to Col 2:8, now we want to come back to Col 2:3. Notice the end of verse 2 he's talking about "Christ Himself, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." How many of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ? All. Is that 95%? No, it's 100%. Is this the Aquinas model where man is sufficient with

his own noodle to handle the empirical details of life autonomously and turn to the Scriptures for the spiritual details of life? No such distinction exists. What this means is that man, starting with himself as an autonomous reasoner, can't know anything aright. So whatever we know aright, every particle of knowledge we know truly, has been revealed to the human race by God. What do the Scriptures say? "What do you have that you have not received?" (1 Cor 4:7.) Ps 94:10, the Lord is the one who teaches man knowledge. Prov 1:7, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Therefore Christ as God is Lord of all and that includes all knowledge. This is why Paul could never boast in anything except Christ and Him crucified. Everything had to be taken captive to Christ. I determined to know nothing apart from Christ. All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. The unashamed testimony of the apostle Paul.

I'll give you two examples: I like to use math because no one ever things that Christ has anything to do with math. So if you're an engineer or you work with math, and you're a Christian ask yourself, how does the math work? Well, I've got equations and there are constants in the equations and so I just put my variables in the equations and solve the equation. But why does the equation work? Where do the constants come from? Well, I don't know. They're just there. If you've never thought through why they worked and what the Scriptures are saying about the equations then you have not been taking every thought captive to Christ, you have been taken captive by vain philosophy. The Scriptures say only God is constant. He's immutable. The so-called constants are finite derivatives of His constancy. But the so-called constants are created by Him. The thing that stands over, above and behind the math equations is the word of God.

Second example, you work with Law. Why do we have law and ethics. Where is this coming from? I don't know, it comes from societies, it comes from people. Wrong. Where do people and societies come from? They come from God. Once again you've left Him out of the equation. And once you leave Him out of the equation of law and ethics what happens to law and ethics? They become transient and provincial. By transient, we mean temporary, they work for society during some segment of time, then new laws are made. By provincial we mean they apply only to one region or group of people, say the United States of America, we have American law and American law applies to Americans. So what happens when non-American's due something

atrocious like Nazi Germany did in WWII. If Law is really just provincial then can you judge Nazi Germany? They were doing what the Fuhrer said to do, they were following German Law. If Law is transient and provincial then you have no basis to judge Nazi war crimes, no basis whatsoever. So you are not living Christ crucified if you think Law comes out of society. Law comes from God and there is right and there is wrong and whole societies can be judged on the basis of how closely they're law approaches God's Law.

Alright, let's conclude what Paul's saying. If you are an unbeliever then you have the old man and the old man says that the organizing principle for thinking and living is man, man is ultimate. But if you are a Christian then you are a new man and as a new man the new organizing principle for thinking and living is Christ. Everything hinges on Christ and Him crucified. He is the Lord of all, every area of life must now be conformed to the His image. We are to think His thoughts after Him. We have this tremendous position and this tremendous task.

If we are tempted to become arrogant in our position or in our knowledge Van Til says, "Believers...have not chosen the Christian position because they were wiser than others. What they have they have by grace alone." This is solely by grace and we have to put off the arrogance that it is by our works. The approach of grace is the approach of humility. Which is why Paul says verse 21.

I do not nullify the grace of God; rather what Paul has done is establish the grace of God. Those who continued in arrogant autonomy to establish righteousness before God were the one's who had nullified the grace of God. Paul on the other hand, humbly admitting he had no righteousness in himself, established that it must be by God's grace through faith. He explains, **for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.** This indeed is a total answer for those trying to establish righteousness with God through keeping the Law. If that were the case then grace would be nullified and works righteousness would be established. This would render the cross of Christ totally unnecessary. Man would be established in his autonomous self-righteousness. The gospel would read that man receives the glory, great things he has done.

Alright, we've analyzed primarily what it means to be crucified with Christ. It means I have a new identity in Christ, I am a new man, the old man was crucified and with it the old way of thinking, the old way of living, a new man has come and that man lives by faith, the content of that faith is contained in the Scriptures, it pertains to every area of life. So as I learn to trust the Lord in these areas then Christ lives in me, I am crucified to the world and the world to me.

ⁱ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians : A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Includes Indexes. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 142.

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