

## ***“What Is the Christian Life?”***

June 5, 2011

Text: Galatians 5:24-26

**In his book *Wasted Faith*, Xn author Jim Elliff writes=>**

“The one who says, ‘I know I’m a Christian because I prayed the sinner’s prayer,’ and who believes all subsequent doubts are attacks from the enemy, is not using a biblical pattern of thinking. Such a person may be strolling precariously along the lip of hell.”

Although many Xns believe that it’s wrong to question one’s own salvation, Elliff argues that it’s right to do so, & points out that II Cor 13:5 actually commands us to do that=>

***“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves.”***

Moreover, in 1 Cor 11:28-29, Paul writes=> ***“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. / For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.”***

This being Communion Sunday, what better time could there be to examine our own hearts to make sure that our faith is truly a saving faith.

Jim Elliff adds=>

“To reveal the true nature of your faith, strip away your reliance upon family traditions, church attendance, church membership, or baptism.... Look beyond the well-intentioned assurances of a trusted parent, pastor, or evangelist. Set these insufficient comforts aside & look at what is left. Then determine if you have what the Bible describes as genuine Xn faith.”

Someone=> “But what am I looking for?”

Ans=> Evidence of the genuine Xn life.

**In today’s text, Paul will describe what constitutes such evidence of a true Christian life=>**

- \* Crucifixion of the flesh,
- \* Walking by the Spirit,
- \* Not walking in the flesh.

### **\* Evidence #1—Crucifixion of the Flesh**

**[Galatians 5:24]=>** *“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*

***“Those who belong to Christ Jesus” refers to true believers.***

The literal wording is=> “Those who are Jesus’ [people].”

They belong to Jesus for several reasons=>

- \* The Father has given them to Jesus (Jn 17:9),
- \* X has purchased them with His own blood (Acts 20:28),
- \* They have voluntarily confessed Him as their Lord (Rom 10:9), making themselves His slaves, owned by Him as their Master,
- \* They are sealed in Him with the H.S. (Eph 1:13).

Their Xnity isn’t just a matter of personal preference, philosophy, or loyalty.

Ultimately, it’s not even a matter of their choice.

It has to do with Jesus’ ownership rights over them.

They belong to Him, & they are His prized possessions.

The so-called “Xns” X described in Mt 7:13 as being on the broad road to destruction, don’t view themselves in this way.

Their lives are their own, and they belong to themselves.

So the 1<sup>st</sup> question we might ask ourselves in trying to assess whether our faith is genuine saving faith is this=>

In my view, do I belong to myself, or do I belong to Jesus?

Who has the primary right over me/my-life/my-choices?

Because this is such a personal/subjective question, we need to look for objective evidence by which we can “judge ourselves rightly” (I Cor 11:29).

**To determine whether/not we belong to Jesus, we must begin by asking ourselves=> Have I crucified the flesh?**

Non-Xns never crucify the flesh, but all born-again Xns, do (every last one of them).

Non-Xns may dislike some of their own evil ways, but only Xns, knowing their flesh is the source of them, hate it so badly they act radically against it—crucifying it (not literally, but morally).

Paul doesn't say this is something Xns *ought* to do;

He says this is something all true Xns actually *do*.

Anyone who doesn't, doesn't “*belong to Christ Jesus.*”

**What does it mean to “crucify the flesh”, and when does a Xn do that? To answer that...**

1<sup>st</sup>, we need to understand that it's not done to us by someone else, but something we do to ourselves.

That makes it slightly different from Gal 2:20, where Paul writes=> “*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*”

Paula is the recipient of the action here, not the doer of the action.

“*Have been crucified*” means God crucified Paul, not that Paul crucified himself.

God ended Paul's old life, replacing it w/ a new life as he was born again.

That also distinguishes our own text from Rom 6:6=>

“*Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*”

Again Paul says that someone else crucified him/us.

But in Gal 5:24, Paul drove the nails himself, so that sin would lose its absolute power over him.

2<sup>nd</sup>, the crucifixion Paul is talking about is an individual act of judgment against our own sinful flesh, we ourselves being the accused, the accuser, the judge, and the executioner.

Paul uses the aorist tense here, meaning that this crucifixion takes place once/for-all at the time of our conversion.

It is Paul's graphic way of describing repentance=>

a rejection of our sin, and a self-rejection in the sense that our own flesh is the cause of that sin.

“Repentance” is a rethinking/reappraisal of ourselves that results in repudiation of our old way of living.

It turns—not only away from it, but against it to oppose it.

\*Q: Is this something that we must do in addition to believing in X?

No, it's simply 1 aspect of true faith in X, that the Bible treats synonymously with living/saving faith.

E.g. in Acts 20:21, Paul says he solemnly testified to both Jews/Greeks “*of repentance toward God & [kai—even] faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

So faith that saves is linked w/ repentance—repentant faith.

\*Q: Is repentance a human work? No, it is granted by God to His elect as a gift of His grace.

In Acts 11:18 the leaders of Jerusalem's church said=> "*God has **granted** to the Gentiles also [a/w/a Jews] the **repentance** that leads to life.*"

**We identify with Christ in His crucifixion as we nail our own sinful/willful flesh to His cross, in an act of judgment.**

You have not really understood what "saving faith" means until you understand this, that there is within it an element of repentance.

X received unto Himself God's wrath over our sin, so we died vicariously in Him who became our Substitute on the cross.

As we believed in Jesus, we implicitly declared ourselves dead to sin, having identified w/ Him in His death for our sin.

Dead men must be buried, so we were buried symbolically in the waters of baptism, again identifying w/ Jesus in His burial.

Baptism itself doesn't save anyone, but it outwardly identifies us w/ X in His burial for our sins.

This is why we don't baptize infants=>

They can't believe with repentant faith.

Baptism has to be an outward sign of the true inward work of repentant faith (i.e. believer's baptism).

The essence of saving faith is accepting Jesus as representing me (or you) in His death/burial.

Rom 6:3-4=> "*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? / Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*"

**Jesus died to save us from our greatest enemy of all—sin.**

If any of us thinks He died merely to save us from hell, we have a woefully inadequate understanding of His death's meaning.

In Mt 1:21, before Jesus' birth, an angel told Joseph=> "*She [Mary] will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will **save** His people [those God has given Him] from their **sins**.*"

So when someone believes in Jesus for salvation, he rejects his own sinfulness (for which Jesus died), by repenting of it, as part of his believing in X.

II Thes 2:13 says, this is a "*salvation thru sanctification.*"

He nails his sinful flesh, a/w/a its passions/desires to X's cross—rejecting, renouncing, & repudiating them.

For a believer to go on living in sin, having considered himself as dead to sin with Jesus, would be absurd.

**Why does Paul describe our repentance as crucifixion?**

1) Because our rejection of sin is to be merciless—like crucifixion.

Crucifixion was a shameful punishment reserved for only the worst of criminals.

That's why Heb 12:2 says Jesus "*endured the **cross**, despising the **shame**.*"

The Xn knows that his flesh is the source of horrendous, shameful sins, & he makes no provision for it at all in his life.

Rom 13:14=> *“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, & make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”*

Crucify it without mercy, as a treacherous, vile, vicious, dangerous enemy.

2) We willingly accept the pain of this crucifixion of our flesh, knowing it will involve sacrificing sinful pleasures we love, but have renounced.

It entails denying fleshly desires, repeatedly choosing to leave them unfulfilled/ungratified.

In the words of Gal 5:16, we won't carry out the desire of the flesh, no matter how loudly our flesh squeals/screams at us.

Our flesh loves the darkness, but in nailing it to the cross, we expose it to the light of X's righteousness, and we expect it to squirm/protest.

3) Crucifixion was a slow/agonizing process (it's not quick like hanging or decapitation).

Soldiers always guarded the site to make sure no one took the victim down till he was dead.

Our job is not to kill the flesh, just to crucify it.

It was crucified once/for-all when we gave our hearts to X, but death by crucifixion takes time, and our flesh won't finally die until we have gone home to be with the Lord, leaving our flesh behind.

Its power has been limited, but it still appeals to us from the cross, asking us to take it down & give it a chance.

Its appeal is strong enough to make Xns feel so conflicted that they say with Paul (Rom 7:23)=> *“I see a different law in the members of my body [flesh], waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.”*

If we're going to avoid becoming a prisoner of our flesh once again, we need to re-nail our flesh to the cross every day.

We need to renew our commitment to X every day.

Not that our original commitment ever lapses.

But we need to refresh ourselves in it, daily sweeping away an readiness to compromise with sin.

And the best way to do that, is to recommit ourselves to serving our Lord in righteousness every day.

Rom 6:13=> *“Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as **instruments of righteousness** to God.”*

You might start out every day praying, “Lord, today again I commit my body/life to You for Your-service.

“Lead me not into temptation, but use me as an instrument of righteousness, for Your glory.”

**Not only must we reject/repudiate our flesh, we must deal with its “passions and desires” in the same way.**

“Passions” are the evil promptings of our flesh that are subconscious/passive—the subtle tendency of our flesh to open us up to temptation, and welcome it into our hearts.

Think of your passions as an openness to sin, a temporary self-imposed vulnerability that often goes unnoticed.

This word usually refers to uncontrolled sexual passions=>

A subtle openness to sinful thoughts/feelings.

Because our passions wait for temptation so quietly, we are often unaware of their influence until it's too late.

A key symptom of passion's subtle influence, is a feeling of coldness/indifference towards God.

As we deal with our passions, by walking in the Spirit, we short-circuit the desires of our flesh.

“*Desire*” refers to unrestrained desire for something we now is forbidden.

This is the word *epithumia*, which is often translated “lust.”

These are conscious/active cravings for that which we know is wrong, & they're far less subtle than passion.

When evil desires kick in, it's time for decisive (even drastic) action to remove ourselves from the scene of temptations, just as Joseph left his coat behind and ran.

It's far easier to head off the flesh at the passion-stage, than it is to deal with it once passion actually erupts into evil desire.

Paul writes with regard to both passion/desire (Col 3:5)=> “*Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, **passion**, evil **desire**.*”

How do we do that? Drive another nail into our flesh (that sinful tendency associated with our body).

Reject it every day, not dabbling even for a moment in the flesh (or revisiting our rejection of it), but presenting our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness.

Then take active steps to walk in the Spirit.

Review=> So the 1<sup>st</sup> evidence Paul gives us here that a person is truly a Xn, (living a true Xn life), is that he has crucified his flesh.

That's what living the Xn life is all about.

### \* **Evidence #2—Walking by the Spirit**

[Galatians 5:25]=> “*If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*”

**Every Xn does live by the Spirit, because his spiritual life comes from the H.S.; but Paul exhorts the Galatians (& us) to live in accordance w/ that fact, thus walking by the H.S.**

We saw in our study of Gal 5:16 that “walking by the Spirit” is actively/submissively following the Spirit's leading.

It occurs when a believer's sins are confessed, he is filling and saturating his mind w/ Scripture, obediently applying it to his heart/life, & sincerely/habitually praying as an expression of his faith-in/love-for the Lord.

It results in a godly lifestyle that manifests the fruit of the H.S.

“Walking by the Spirit” also administers a knock-out punch to the flesh that we have already nailed to the cross, nullifying its passions/desires by the Spirit's power, so that we won't carry out the flesh's desires.

But here in Gal 5:25, Paul is contrasting living by the Spirit with walking by the Spirit.

He's saying that if the Spirit is the Source of our life spiritually, He must be allowed to direct our lives.

As we submit to His direction, we walk by the Spirit.

Step by step, we live purposefully/continuously/actively in accordance w/ His will, out of our love for God.

“Walk” is στοιχέω which means to “live in conformity with.”

So “walking by the Spirit” (as used here) refers to living according to the line laid down by the H.S., following what we know from Scripture to be His will.  
And doing so in the Spirit’s power.

In the words of Rom 8:5, it is setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, thus living according to the H.S.

**This affects our whole way of life—our lifestyle.**

We do those things the Spirit would have us do, but avoid the things that would grieve Him.

The Spirit’s priorities for our life become our priorities, the Spirit’s standards our standards, the Spirit’s desires/pleasures our own desires/pleasures, the Spirit’s griefs our griefs.

We live this life so as to avoid quenching the Spirit w/i us.

“Walking by the Spirit” is “the true Xn life”, because it gives evidence that a person has been made spiritually alive by the Spirit.

And it is evidence that he continues to live by the Spirit, who is sanctifying his life through the renewal of his mind, as he learns/obeys God’s Word.

**As believers, we have nailed our accursed flesh to the cross and looked into Jesus’ loving face for our salvation.**

This is a reality in every true believer’s life, because every begins that life by acting decisively to rid himself of sin, through a repentant attitude.

Then he spends the rest of his life returning to that same attitude, confessing his sins to X, and repeatedly enjoying His cleansing.

He is horrified by the realization that Jesus died on the cross because of that sin.

He says to himself, “From now on, I can have nothing to do with it. I can add nothing to the horrible sin-burden my Savior bore for me on the cross.”

He comes to realize that X died for him out of love, & asks, “How could I ever again offend such love, w/ my sin?”

He will inevitably do so, because at times he’ll lose the battle w/ his flesh, but it will grieve him terribly, driving him to confess it to his Lord.

We fear the face of our beloved Savior, hanging on that same cross to which we have nailed our sinful flesh.

We don’t fear His rejection—He loves us too much for that—but we do fear His tears shed for us, & we ask, “How could I ever have rebelled against such loving kindness?”

As a result, slaves to sins such as drugs/alcohol are made sober by faith in X.

People who have long since given up any thought of sexual purity begin living pure lives to the glory of God, resisting temptation as new creatures in X, with new affections/desires & a compelling love for their newfound Savior.

**When the gospel is faithfully preached, the H.S. is present, taking the things of X and revealing them to people.**

The Spirit washes/regenerates those who believe in X, and a miracle of purification takes place w/i their hearts.

1 Jn 5:1 says=> “*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,*” then verse 18 adds=> “*No one who is born of God sins; but He [X] who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.*”

As we walk by the Spirit, the power of the Spirit changes our desires, so that we love the things of the Spirit=>

holiness/justice/truth.

If sinners will only look to Jesus, the passions/lusts they could never overcome on their own, will yield to His cleansing power.

And they will never want to go back to the old life of the flesh, which had nothing to offer them but ugly sinfulness/unrighteousness/Satanic-deception.

Review=> What is the true Xn life? It's crucifying the flesh and walking by the Spirit.

\* **Evidence #3—Not Walking by the Flesh**

[Galatians 5:26]=> *“Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, **envying** one another.”*

**Of the 15 deeds of the flesh we saw in Gal 5:19-21, why would Paul single out “envying”?**

Perhaps because envying was the culminating sin of those deeds of the flesh that I referred to as “strife sins.”

That part of the list of sins progressively becomes worse, until we reach the worst of all—“envyings.”

As you may remember, envy is worse than jealousy—the desire for something that someone else has;

Envy desires to deprive others of what they do have.

The Gk words for “envy” & “murder” come from the same root, because murder is depriving others of life, a person's most precious possession.

Envy is one of the vilest manifestations of man's sinful flesh—meanness/hatred that delights in pulling others down.

**Paul may have been addressing the issues of boasting/envy because they had become a serious threat to the Galatians' unity/fellowship.**

It might have begun with the Judaizers boasting that their being racially connected with Abraham through circumcision made them spiritually superior to Gentile believers.

This could have led some Gentiles to challenge them in a hostile spirit of arrogant/bitter antagonism, while others quietly settled back into a pattern of silent envious hatred.

Rom 14:17 says the kingdom of God is=> righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit—the very opposite of such a highly charged atmosphere as that in the Galatian churches, where the deeds of the flesh were creating havoc, spiritually.

Paul is saying, Don't set this whole disastrous process in motion by boasting & creating envy/anger in other people's hearts.

Rude self-assertion like that is displeasing to the Lord, and brings out the worst in other people.

By contrast, God Himself said in Jer 9:24—*“Let him who **boasts boast** of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.*”

Xns should be seeking to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, as they walk in the Spirit.

**We should also conduct a housecleaning of our own hearts, to avoid walking in the flesh.**

We should pray w/ Davie (Psa 139:23-24)—*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; / And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.”*

We should patrol our hearts, prepared to drag our own deeds of the flesh before God's throne for His judgment, our own conscience being our primary accuser.

We should especially groan w/i ourselves, over deeds of the flesh we've committed which have drug others down.

Writing about the Lord's Table (of which we are about to partake), Paul says in I Cor 11=> "*If we **judged ourselves** rightly, we should not be judged*" (11:31).

There is no spiritual merit in beating ourselves up over our sin;

But it's profane blasphemy to take a blasé, devil-may-care, nonchalant attitude towards sins that sent our Savior to the cross.

Sincere/heartfelt confession of our sins to X, avoids that.

And if we confess them, He is faithful/just to forgive them, and cleanse us of all our unrighteousness.

On the other hand, 1 Cor 11:27 says=> "*Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.*"

***“What Is the Christian Life?”***

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Text: Galatians 5:24-26

**In today’s text Paul will describe what constitutes evidence of a true Christian life...**

**\* Evidence #1—Crucifixion of the Flesh**

**[Galatians 5:24]**

1. “*Those who belong to Christ Jesus*” refers to [10 true] believers.  
I Cor 11:28-29; Jn 17:9; Acts 20:28; Rom 10:9; Eph 1:13; Mt 7:13; I Cor 11:29
2. To determine whether or not we belong to Jesus, we must begin by asking ourselves, have I [22 crucified] the flesh?  
Gal 2:20; Rom 6:6; Gal 5:24
3. The crucifixion Paul is talking about is an individual act of judgment against our own sinful flesh, we ourselves being the accused, the [16 accuser], the judge, and the executioner.  
Acts 20:21; 11:18
4. We identify with Christ in His crucifixion as we nail our own sinful, willful [12 flesh] to His cross.  
Rom 6:3-4; Mt 1:21; II Thes 2:13
5. Why does Paul describe our repentance as crucifixion? Because our rejection of sin is to be [18 ruthless] like crucifixion.  
Heb 12:2; Rom 13:14; Gal 5:16; Rom 7:23
6. If we are going to avoid becoming a prisoner of our flesh once again, we need to re-nail our flesh to the cross [12 every] day.  
Rom 6:13; Col 3:5
7. Reject it every day, not dabbling even for a moment in the flesh, but presenting our bodies to [8 God] as instruments of righteousness.

**\* Evidence #2—Walking by the Spirit**

**[Galatians 5:25]**

Gal 5:16, 25

8. Paul is contrasting *living* by the Spirit with *walking* by the Spirit; he is saying that if the Spirit is the Source of our life spiritually, He must be allowed to [14 direct] of our lives.  
Rom 8:5; I Jn 5:1, 18
9. As we walk by the Spirit, the power of the Spirit changes our desires so that we [10 love] the things of the Spirit—holiness, justice, and truth.

**\* Evidence #3—Not Walking by the Flesh**

**[Galatians 5:26]**

10. Paul may have been addressing the issue of envy because it had become a serious [14 threat] to the Galatians' unity.

Rom 14:17; Jer 9:24; Psa 139:23-24; I Cor 11:31

11. There is no spiritual merit in beating ourselves up over our sin, but it is profane blasphemy to take a blasé, devil-may-care attitude towards sins that sent our [14 Savior] to the cross.

I Cor 11:27