

Pondering Christ in Galatians

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Well, hello, and welcome to Ponder by NorthernLife. We're having a conversation about the word of the Lord as it was preached to us on Sunday, and as we encounter it in our everyday lives. I'm here with Ben, Jono, and Tristan.

Jono, great to have you back after- Thank you, good to be back. Yeah, after a well-deserved break, I think.

And we are pondering Jono's sermon on Christ in Galatians, specifically looking at that verse in Galatians 2.20. Jono, you want to give us a brief overview of that sermon?

Yeah, so Galatians is a letter Paul wrote to the churches in the top of Turkey. A bunch of churches that were being affected by false teaching from Jews to say that the gospel involved the traditions of Judaism plus Christ.

So Paul was getting pretty riled by that, and it's very passionate, the Book of Galatians, in the way he deals with false teaching. Because his desire is to protect the purity of the gospel, grace alone, appropriated by faith.

So yeah, we looked at one of my favorite verses, Galatians 2 20, and it's just really quite simple. The idea that Paul says is the gospel is that you die to yourself, you die with Christ, and you receive his life, his resurrection life.

It's no longer I that lives, but Christ who lives in me. And then he goes into this sort of really practical idea that it's about a life lived day by day, believing each day that Christ is the Son of God who loved us and died for us.

So, it's a really simple, yet incredibly profound gospel outline. That's what we tried to unpack.

Yeah, I thought it was a great, yeah, very gospel-centered message. Tristan, Ben, reflections from you guys on the sermon?

Yeah, for me, I honed in on the actual privilege that it is that Christ liveth in me, like, just that line, because there was a British evangelist that I followed called Leonard Ravenhill.

He said, those are the most important words we can utter on the side of eternity, that Christ lives in me.

And just the weightiness of what that actually means is, when you actually lock in and hone in on what those words mean to you, it's very powerful.

So I'm grateful to be in the New Testament again. We've had quite a few weeks in the Old Testament preaching some pretty tough messages. So being in Galatians is nice.

Just the reminder of the gospel of grace was helpful for me. I think it's the Ben condition. Maybe it's the human condition to want to say that it's Christ plus something, Christ plus my effort, Christ plus my earning.

And so this reminder from Galatians that the gospel is Christ plus nothing equals everything is really helpful to come back to.

Yeah.

Yeah, absolutely.

So Jono, your first point was this idea of the idea of crucifying the self, that no longer I who lives. You said part of our old self needs to die, as Paul was saying.

My first question is, how can we identify what parts of ourselves need to be put to death?

It's, I think up front, it's good to say, it's a hard concept to understand death when I haven't died. But I think what's helpful for me is the idea, the picture of a cross is not half death. It's an entire laying down.

It's very clear. So I'm sort of wanting to, in my understanding of it, lean into that. It's like, okay, it is a daily consecrating.

It's over. I'm just trusting, Lord, that your way is better than mine. And I'm trusting in the beauty of this gospel that I'm coming under.

So that's a little bit, I guess, overly spiritual as an answer. But that's the main thing for me. It's all of me.

Right.

Rather than parts of me.

It's like, I've just got a consecrating on the altar, lay down my life.

So I just kind of want to wrestle with that a little bit. So you're saying daily giving all of ourselves.

I'm just wrestling, does that mean we give up our individuality or we're saying, you know, the things I like, the things I enjoy, I have to put those aside and we all kind of become like little cookie cutter Jesus.

I mean, I know that's not what you're saying, but that's a potential way someone could see that. Yeah, what do you think?

I think it's absolutely the opposite of that. So it's the richness of who I am is the celebration of the life I lay down.

So I would say it more, I'm laying down everything that me, Jonathan Shanks, entails, all my power, all my agency, I'm laying that down. And in the next part of the verse says, Christ lives in me. And so I'm saying, here it is, all of me.

I'm not the same as Ben, Tristan, you, like we're all different. But yeah, so I think it's the exact opposite of that. There's not a cookie cutter, but I'm saying all of me is being laid down.

Now, how Christ lives through me and in me is the next part of the verse. And I think that's a profound mystery. But I do think the picture of marriage is a nice one.

We say, all of me is yours. Really? Is that?

How do you quantify that at the front of the altar of the church? But it's just a decision. It's like, I'm committing myself in that direction.

I'm with you. I'm laying down my life.

Yeah, it's good. I remember CS. Lewis says in one of his books that when we turn to Jesus, when his life becomes our life, we become more truly ourselves.

This kind of idea that sin is not original. Like, we think that we're so creative in the way that we sin, but it's all sort of the same thing. It makes you the same type of person.

But when you come alive in Christ, you become more truly and richly and fully yourself. And we each become more different in the body as the Spirit of God brings us to life.

Yeah, it's good.

Yeah, is it almost a sense that when we lay our whole selves down before Christ, Christ then chooses to pick up some parts and leave some parts in the dust? Is that a good way to think of it?

Yeah.

Yeah.

So, I guess thinking on a practical level, I'm waking up on Monday morning. Okay. How do I lay my full self down?

Is that done in prayer? Is that an attitude thing? Is there practices that help with that?

What do I do in the morning to say, okay, this is all yours, God?

Yes. It is all those things. I remember a sermon that you preached at years ago, where you made the point of when you get out of bed and you twist and your feet touch the ground, the first thing you say is the gospel.

And for me, it's Romans 8.1, there is now no condemnation for me, because I'm in Christ Jesus. And so, letting that be the first thing that you say, the first act of your day is consecration to God, reminding yourself of the gospel.

I think that's a very practical, very helpful thing to lay your life down first thing in the morning. But yes, it is prayer, it's practices, it's an attitude. It is all of these things.

And I think sometimes we get lost in that comfort and just hang out in the grace side of what it means to be a Christian.

And I think it's a very active, it's an active way of living life every single day. It's making that decision again every single day and living in that continuous cycle of just deep reliance on what God brings to the table.

Yeah.

Part of it, I think, is also just being grateful. Thank you, Lord, that I don't have to live in my strength and power today. Yeah.

Today, I'm laying down my life and I have, and you know that, and maybe I'm struggling with something and I'm feeling, it feels harder to say those words. But he's journeying with us in all of that.

It's, as I said in the sermon, I think this stuff is hard. It's just, it's good for you to keep asking the question. I think people have to appropriate the truth into their soul.

And that's through practice, through living it out. So you learn how to do it, I think.

Yeah, Ben, so you said, in your answer, you were saying yes to all of those things. And you gave that example of, you know, if your feet hit the ground, you recite that to you.

I want to press you on the specifics of that, and press all of you on the specifics of that. What might an example of a routine that engages that look like? What specific practices, how specifically could we pray to accomplish this?

Yes, lots of different answers for the different parts of that question.

On the prayer level, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, not my will, but yours be done, is a good thing to say in the start of the morning.

That as I approach my day with all of its events and opportunities and challenges, let your will be done in and through me, not my will. So kind of this idea, learned surrender were two words from the sermon, which I think were really key.

Learned surrender is handing over your day with your agenda to God, for him to have his way. That's a key part of it.

Another super practical thing that I got from a book is to go to scripture before phone, scripture before scrolling, I call it, which is like before I get on my phone and mess up my mind by looking at the news or feed the performance animal in me by

looking at social media or any of these things, I go to scripture first to renew my mind in the truth of God before I go to those things. I found that really helpful.

In fact, the book has this great image of, it's a parenting book, and he talks about the kind of when kids wake up scared of monsters, and the parent comes in and says, oh, darling, there's no monster under the bed.

But he says, we adults wake up to monsters too, the monster of performance when we look at our social media, the monster of kind of grief at the state of the world when we look at news, the monster of busyness when we look at our emails.

And so kind of letting scripture, letting the voice of God be the first thing that you hear in the morning is a really, really helpful way of framing your entire day in sort of waking up in the spirit, not waking up in the flesh.

So hopefully that's a, I'm not a very practical person. I'm more like preach the theory and let people work out the application for themselves. Like that's a fair criticism.

What's the book?

Habit to the Household by Justin Whitmore Early.

It's good, isn't it?

One of the best parenting books I've read, but even honestly for just all people.

It's very helpful.

Yeah, I grew up in a sense where it was, make it so that it's a habit, but it's not mechanical.

So make it a habit, like my parents or my grand mostly, and my uncle, when I stayed with them, it's, you will do devotion in the morning, you'll pray in the morning, then you'll do everything else afterwards, and then you'll end the day the same way.

And then growing up in that frame, and part of my story is it became mechanical, and then I came to a point of salvation where it's, this all has meaning, and it's real meaning.

So I think just those practices and what you were saying earlier, Jono, about give it a go, like just do it, and you'll find out.

And by regular practice, and if it's like praying a short prayer in the morning, before you touch your feet on the ground after you get out of bed, it's those repeated cycles that I always found helpful, that's like wired into me now.

I remember seeing Erwin McManus, an American creative pastor, prophet, speaking once. And people were asking him this exact question. What do you do?

What's your morning regime? And because you're a bit of a hero of the faith in the modern day. And his response was quite interesting.

He said, oh, I'm just a different personality. Like sometimes I can't sleep. So when you say, what do I do in a day?

It's like sometimes I sort of work all night. And what is a day? So he was just the extreme of a personality that wasn't regimented.

And I'm not that extreme, but I, it's, I'm not regimented in my day's practice. Like it's more that sense of committing the day. Thank you for your grace again today.

And the days are very different for me. I'm always connecting with the Lord. I'm sometimes studying all day long in the Bible, and other times I'm not.

But yeah, it's, I think it's important for people to realize, try to match your, the style of your personality. It doesn't have to be the same thing every day.

And I would say also that it's not an individual thing. Like, there's community behind that. There's options of a prayer group on WhatsApp.

There's devotions that you can do together, like Daily Sevens. It's all those different community-based resources that can help you to help in those practices.

Yeah, that's a really good point, Tristan.

With this idea of putting the self to death, and I know you've said it's a daily thing, which is important to keep in mind, but I will still pose this question anyway.

Many of us wrestle, I guess, with the zombie of our old self, as it were, that there's a struggle that the habits of the old self and the desires of the old self sort of keep coming back. And that can be really frustrating, I think, to a lot of us.

I don't know, what would you say to that? What would you say to the frustration of the old self constantly sort of lingering around, waiting to pull you back?

Only that it's extremely relatable, I think, immediately of Romans 7 and Romans 8, the partnership of those two chapters, two of the most significant chapters in the whole Bible, in my view.

And Romans 7 is the picture of what life looks like in the flesh, meaning without God's help trying to make it on our own. And then Romans 8 is the picture of what life looks like with God, the life of the Spirit.

And we're constantly living, I mean, there shouldn't be a tension because we have been crucified. You know, 1 John makes it clear that if you sin, you're not in Christ, which is this kind of real strong language that kind of shakes us.

But Romans 7 and 8 is kind of the dynamic of the Christian life, that we fall back into the flesh again, like I was saying before, the Ben condition, the human condition is to rely on the flesh again and have to crucify the flesh again to get back in

the Spirit. But the gospel is always that there is no condemnation for me. And so we're trying to live in Romans 8, even in the midst of kind of a Roman 7 life living in the flesh, but also the Spirit is alive within me.

I think you can get better at that. You get better at living in Romans 8 more than Romans 7 with time.

I've always learned to know that it's also expected, like for that zombie, as you call it, or your past self to come back.

It's always expected to come back because not overtake you hopefully, but it's always going to pop up every now and then because that's the nature of what we hold to.

It's controversial, but it's life-changing, and it's offensive to our old selves, and that's always going to try and pull us back, and it's about standing firm in that Christ is life, that God is life, and like 1 John 3, I think, it's remain in me.

Like there's a reason we have to cling on to Jesus. There's a reason we have to come back to Him every morning. It's because it's expected that your old self is going to pop up.

Yeah.

Yeah, this past, this book, Galatians, is one of the great texts of the Bible that contrasts the acts of the sinful nature in Chapter 5 and the fruit of the Spirit, isn't it? It's just right there, a few verses apart.

And I just agree with you, Tristan, that it's always there. I think like almost humorously with the Apostle Peter, he just gets things so right.

And then certainly from the way you read the Bible, how it's presented, it feels like very soon after, it's like get behind me, Satan. You don't have in mind the things of God, but the things of the world.

And then the example of him, Peter, having such incredible revelation. And then he's the one who's pandering to the Jews. It's like, dude, you're the guy who preached the Pentecost sermon.

How could you go back? Like, no one will write that lives by Christ who lives by man. I mean, you are fully done, filled with the Spirit to the brim, fixed for life.

No, like, he's a great example of just its manner that goes off.

And that doesn't mean to say that grace is less powerful, but this side of heaven, of the resurrection, we're gonna struggle with the acts of the sinful nature, the desires of the flesh. They're just there.

And that's why Galatians 2.20 is so powerful. You don't graduate from it. The life that I now live, that's always what got me from the Jerry Bridges quote when I was 22.

The life that I now live, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Like, that's the answer to your question. I've got to do this daily.

I don't just get to live a life like that. I got to eke it out. And we just don't always make the right decision.

It takes us just a little bit off. Just, it's so subtle.

And I'm reminded of Paul saying to the 2nd, the Corinthian Church, I'm concerned that just as Eve was led astray by the serpent's cunning, you have been led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Most of the New Testament's like this stuff, isn't it? Every letter is like, you got problems, you got problems.

But where's the letter that's like, I just want to let you know, you guys are in the spirit all the time and it looks beautiful from a distance. There's always problems.

So again, Tristan, as you said, for discipleship, we need to let new Christians or any Christian know, the struggle is real. But what's the answer? Spiritual disciplines grow in the grace of God, all that stuff.

But if you want to get a simple answer, it's the life that I now live. I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. And that's not a bad verse to commit to memory.

Yeah, 100 percent.

Amen.

One aspect of that that you talked about is preaching the gospel to yourself.

And you used, well, you gave us a little audio example in the sermon and you talked about being like an African American preacher in terms of the passion and style of that particular iteration of the church.

Yeah.

I'm just going to, I guess, again, dive into the specifics of that a little bit. Do you mean that I'm going to like look in the mirror and say to myself, like, say the words aloud, like, you know, Jesus Christ died to set you free, you were a sinner.

Is that how you mean or what does that look like for you as you think about it?

I would say the idea of being marinated in the wonderful truth of the gospel regularly. I think singing a song, a praise song, a worship song that captures what stirs your heart. I think that's really important.

You've got to learn what stirs my heart. We often quote Dallas Willard around here, and he said, it's hard to sin while you're singing a hymn of praise.

Like in the moment, it's hard to be like, I'm sinning in whatever way, and I'm also engaging my vocal cords and my heart in worship. So, I feel like you've got to understand your makeup, what stirs your heart to joy, adoration, love, commitment.

We get stirred from different things. The old Braveheart, a quote, when he says, freedom. Some people might not be stirred by that, but others would be like, yeah, I'm ready to go.

I remember at Bible College, I was amazed at one particular very gifted lecturer. He turned on his powers of inspiration for about three minutes. I was just like, show me where to give my life.

I'm just ready to go. I was just like, I'm just, my hearts are stirred. I find that I'm stirred by the sort of eschatological edge of theology, you know, Jesus is returning, he's the king of kings, there's nothing else more important.

I'm giving my life for his others, like, I just want to sit in the corner and know that he loves me. So that's my answer to your question. I think it's understanding what stirs you, and I find emotion is drawn up when my heart's being engaged.

So I remember years ago, I was like, I hadn't listened to Christian music in my heads, in my earphones for a while. And I went for a walk, and I love Shane and Shane, always have. They lift my spirit, sort of.

And I remember walking along, just bawling my eyes out, as this music was sort of going into my head and soul, and it was just filling me with this, you are worthy. And it's like, yes, you are worthy.

So for me, sometimes it's looking in the mirror and saying, bless the Lord, oh, my soul. Come on, get up and bless him, he's worthy. Because the soul, I am a soul, I don't have a soul.

So it's like, you living thing, give him the glory. So that's just me. Like I, part of my gifting is encouraging, encouragement and exhortation.

So yeah, you got to find what stirs your heart. That's what I think it means to preach the gospel to yourself.

Yeah, that's awesome. This idea is helpful of gospel fluency, that we should know the gospel well enough that we can tell it to ourselves in all the different ways that the gospel speaks to.

Last night at church, we had this really meaningful time around the communion table where people shared their testimony and probably 15 people shared for 15 seconds each of the particular way that the gospel kind of hits home for them or the way that

it did when they kind of first came to faith. And I was so encouraged because over here there's a person sharing about the love of God was the thing and over here it's the grace of God and over here it's the life of God.

But it's that idea of gospel fluency that wherever I find myself in life, whatever I'm going through, being able to know the story of the gospel, which is Christ crucified and resurrected, to know that story and to apply it to my situation.

So I'm struggling with sin. Thank you God that your blood sets me free from the power of sin to live in the freedom of the Spirit. If I'm kind of lonely and isolated, thank you that you love me and welcome me.

It's this gospel fluency of being able to tell the gospel to ourselves in all the situations that we find ourselves in. And I love Shane and Shane too.

Like Paul talks a lot about losing heart. And I feel like this is directly part of the way we deal with losing heart. We preach the gospel to ourselves.

We do that as you said Tristan, in community as well. It's like learn how to preach the gospel to yourself and your friends. And in community, and in small groups.

It's like, and that's gospel fluency.

Yeah, I see it when I'm in that community. Like I don't, like yes, I get very emotional when there's music and there's Frisian again, and there's all these different things.

But like, if it, like sometimes yes, I would say, I would like quote myself to myself scripture, but I find it in community the best, where it's we all one body worshiping together. We all one body praying together.

And I think that's the importance of just speaking out loud. Like sometimes we say, I'm going to say a prayer in my heart. And if it, if that's for you, that's for you.

But I think there's a real power in praying to God out loud. Like I would do that at home sometimes if I'm like feeling for it.

And it just feels different, like just speaking out loud, voicing it out loud, worshiping aloud with no cares of if you're hitting the right notes or not.

Just having that freedom in the spirits, which is, yeah, it gives you chills when I'm speaking about it now, so.

I remember you saying, Tristan, once on Ponder a couple of weeks ago, that it's really good to have a midweek Bible study as this kind of anchor in the middle of your week to reset your mind on the things of God in community.

I think that's a helpful idea that, you know, Hebrew says don't neglect meeting together with the saints. So we do that on Sunday. Our hearts are lifted back to God.

And then maybe we go like Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and we're wondering, but then you have that anchor again on Wednesday night, Tuesday night, whatever, to bring us back to God again in community. That's helpful.

This conversation kind of raises a question and a challenge for me, because I've had conversations with people who, where there's a little bit of skepticism towards reliance on experience in the journey of faith.

I mean, you guys are talking about being stirred with your emotions. That's obviously a great thing. But can that be a problem if we become reliant on it?

Like, because obviously we don't always feel stirred. So as great as it is, I guess my challenge is, is there a problem with becoming too reliant on that so that when you're not feeling that you feel like your faith is diminished?

What do you make of that?

It certainly involves an emotional response. That's what we're talking about, to be inspired. But I'm just reminded, I guess, people might get sick of me as a preacher saying, amen.

And I've done that since I was 22 when I was reading Leonard Ravenhill, Why Revival Tarries, and Henry Scugel, The Life of God and the Soul of a Man, like old school stuff where people would say amen from the congregation.

And I've always been that preacher. I don't think about saying amen. But when I say amen, I'm asking the congregation to preach the gospel to each other by saying amen back.

That's not an emotional thing. That's just like a cerebral communal thing to say. We just said a statement of truth.

I did from the pulpit, that's from the Bible about God and what Jesus has done. Amen. I'm not really thinking that you're suddenly feeling some tingles.

I'm just asking for you to commit from your mouth. And that's what we do in this spiritual world. We use our words to say stuff that changes things.

Amen. So be it. And so, yeah, I feel like there's something that's very much not emotional.

About preaching the gospel to yourself. Right. And it can be getting back to the practical stuff, as simple as just saying, Amen.

I'm with you. And for a lot of people to vocalize like that, they've never done it. They're just sort of somewhat insipid.

Don't say a thing, but it's like, are you with us? Are you with the truth?

When you encountering the gospel in Christ, sometimes, yes, it doesn't invoke an emotional response, but it always invokes a response in a different way. That's the power of what we're dealing with here.

And I think at the same time that we all have our different ways of worshiping God in the week, we all respond differently. And when we rely too much on experience, we're focusing on the wrong thing.

But if it's rooted and grounded in the truth, then those experiences back it up in the background. So yes, we all respond differently. Sometimes it's emotional, sometimes it's not emotional, but it's all in one response.

Psalm 103, you quoted before, has that idea of...

You talked about it as soul conversations once, telling yourself that God is worthy of praise. And it says there, Psalm 103, praise the Lord my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name, praise the Lord my soul, forget not all his benefits.

Who forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases, redeems your life from the pit. It's kind of this idea of looking back at what God has done as a reminder to yourself that God is still who he is in the present.

And so that's kind of, that's not an emotional thing. That's a mental memory based thing of, oh gosh, I don't, who are you God? What have you done for me?

I'm gonna remind myself of your faithfulness in the past as a way of grounding my faith in the present and in the future. That's sort of what the Psalms do. They, yeah, soul conversation, speaking to myself, which is actually really cool.

It's not only us speaking to ourself, it's the Spirit of God, that word in Romans 8, co-witnessing. It's the word for witness and the word for with, meaning to witness together with our spirit that we are a child of God.

That's what a soul conversation is.

Yeah, those are all really good responses. To circle back to kind of the beginning of that conversation though, Jono, you talked about how you were really stirred by Shane and Shane and by worship music.

Tristan, you talked about how you were really stirred by community. Ben, I just wanted to ask what you were stirred by specifically, just to give some people ideas of what's not new.

It's music for me as well.

Okay, great. Well, good to have that affirmation.

Jono, your sermon really focused in on that one verse, Galatians 2 verse 20.

And so I just wanted to, and I know you did it a little bit in the sermon, but open up a question of, I guess, how that fits in with the rest of Galatians, and if there was anything you left on the cutting room floor, looking at any other parts of

Oh, there's that whole part about the slave of Abraham and the promise that we didn't go into it all.

But I tried to touch on it with the idea of, how do you find freedom? The opposite of freedom is slavery. And yeah, that's the main gist of, I think, the whole book.

Who has bewitched you? Why have you gone back to that which is slavery, when grace, the gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the giving of the Spirit is what leads us to freedom?

So yeah, there was, I mean, I don't know what we could do, talk about, but I feel like that 220, many people would say that it is this sort of center of the book, because it's explaining in a very pithy way how to respond to the false teaching of

Christ plus, religion, religious customs and activities. Christ plus, religion, religious customs and activities.

Fantastic.

Well, and it is a great verse. I think now we'll move on to our palate cleanse question. And of course, the sermon was titled, Christ is our life.

So I was thinking about lives, and I've got just a fun, silly question here. If you were writing an autobiography, what would you title it in five words or less?

For me, it's five words exactly. Where else would I go? I was talking to you about this last night, Dad.

My sort of story of faith is Jesus' words in, actually, Peter's words in John 6. Jesus turns to the disciples and says, you don't also want to leave, do you? Because Jesus had said some crazy things and people were leaving him.

And Peter says, Lord, to whom else would we go? You have the words of eternal life. I feel like that's my life idea.

Where else would I go? Who else offers eternal life? Who else offers freedom other than Jesus?

So my autobiography would be, where else would I go?

That's a great one.

Mine's four words, Jesus is worth it.

And he is.

Actually, I'm not gonna make up one now. I did this in, when I was in like start of high school, grade eight. And my like title was, what else do I respond to?

So like being called into youth ministry and leading, I was in that phase of just getting stuck into church stuff, as I was old enough. I was like, okay, I'll just respond with yes. And just yes to everything.

And sometimes I don't learn to say no. So that's why it's yes. And yourself, Jack.

I think Ben, you stole one.

I would probably would have done something along the lines because I love that verse also.

Tristan, you kind of stole mine as well. Your year eight self had a similar thing.

He thought I did it earlier.

22 of 22

Yeah.

Well, you stole his. It was a prophecy. You were stealing from me.

Everything is meaningless.

I'll go from Ecclesiastes.

Heaven.

Heaven. Everything is meaningless.

Yeah.

Sure.

I'm not going to read that.

I'll make terrible returns. All right. Well, thank you guys for coming on the pod this week.

Thank you all for listening. I really hope this has been helpful and have a blessed week.