

The Confession of Paul: Christ Before, Above, and Over All
Galatians 1:11-2:21

I. Confession: I am Crucified with Christ

A. Questions

1. For us
 - a. What single, simple sentence summarizes your life at this moment?
 - b. What assertion brings together your past, present, and future and expresses the real you, the whole and complete you at this point in your life?
2. Paul's Life Confession
 - a. **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)** *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.*
 - b. That is the summary statement of all Paul's experiences, knowledge, values, circumstances, and expectations.
 - (1) Paul is utterly, totally, completely, without reservation, regret, or restrictions, sold out to Jesus Christ.
 - (2) In fact, Paul is dead and it is Christ Himself who lives in Paul, according to Paul's confession.
 - c. Our Question:
 - (1) How does Paul arrive at this level of conviction, commitment, and conduct?
 - (2) Is Paul's amazing confession merely a result of his conversion or is there something else, something more to this incredible statement of faith?

B. Proposition: Paul's confession would not exist as it does without both his conversion AND his ongoing commitment to faith and obedience.

1. Many Christians stuck in mediocrity and immaturity wonder if Paul is an anomaly in the kingdom.
 - a. They stand on the sidelines wishing they could have the depth of life in faith and in spirit, in grace and in power Paul displays.
 - b. They sense an unexplainable, uncomfortable deficiency.
 - c. They wonder why their spiritual fervor wanes.
2. **The reason may be they are standing in their conversion but are not investing in their confession.**
 - a. Our confession is the position statement of our lives.
 - b. Paul's confession is,
 - (1) "I am crucified with Christ."
 - (a) I have given up everything in life for Christ.
 - (b) I am completely sold out to the will and glory of God just like Jesus.
 - (c) My values, desires, and efforts are no longer tainted by self-interest but are new in Christ.

- (d) **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
 - (e) **Galatians 2:20 (ESV)** *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.*
- (2) Paul states up front that the life he now lives is the work of Jesus.
- (a) Paul's life lived in the body on this world is the result of Christ living the holy life in the will of God, for the glory of God, that all of us were created to live.
 - (b) It is the result of Christ's sacrificial, substitutionary death on the cross in Paul's place, on Paul's behalf.
 - (c) Paul's life is the result, in part, of God raising Christ from the dead, certifying the success of His earthly mission as Savior and Redeemer.
- c. First, Paul grounds his confession in his conversion but his confession doesn't end there.
- (1) His confession is the sum of his conversion and his commitment.
 - (2) Let's turn to the text this morning and gather **five (5) components of Paul's commitment that lead to his confession.**

II. 5 Components of Paul's Confession Building Commitment

A. Paul acknowledges the unique source and nature of the gospel around which his life and confession revolve. (1:11-12)

1. The gospel is not the product of human intellect or imagination but of direct, divine revelation.
 - a. The gospel Paul lives and preaches came from Christ Himself.
 - b. It is neither a fairy tale nor a second-hand story.
 - c. The gospel is the divine revelation of God Himself to the world in and through Jesus Christ.
 - (1) Conviction of that truth is the work of the Holy Spirit
 - (a) **John 16:8-11 (ESV)** *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*
 - (2) Commitment to this truth is the work of faith.
 - (a) **Romans 1:17 (ESV)** *For in it the righteousness of*

*God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written,
“The righteous shall live by faith.”*

2. The life of faith, where we are crucified with Christ and He lives in us, is not a manmade life but is a God made life through the gospel.
 - a. It is God who *works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure.* (Phil. 2)
 - b. **Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***
3. The gospel is the means by which God calls us to faith.
 - a. The gospel is the motive for the life of faith.
 - b. **Loving the gospel, living the gospel, and proclaiming the gospel are what God saves us to when we are rescued from guilt and sin as announced in the gospel.**
4. The revelation of the person and purpose of God in and through Jesus Christ is the component at the heart of Paul’s confession.
5. The gospel ushers in conversion, motivates commitment, and molds our confession.

T.S. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the key component to Paul’s confession but it is not the only component.

B. Paul acknowledges the transforming power of the gospel.

1. Paul doesn’t minimize or marginalize his history
 - a. I was a religious Jew
 - b. I persecuted the church of God, violently, destructively
 - c. I was advancing in Judaism. I was the rising star.
 - d. I was extremely zealous for the traditions.
2. But look what God did!
 - a. God set me apart before I was born!
 - b. God called me by His grace!
 - c. God revealed His Son to me!
 - d. God sent me to preach to the Gentiles!
3. God acted not on account of Paul’s faith but on account of His own sovereign will gave Paul the faith to act!
 - a. Paul’s life is entirely a testimony to the wisdom of God’s will and the power of God’s purpose to accomplish His will.
 - b. Folks, you are not here today because you chose Christ, but because He chose you!
 - (1) You were lost.
 - (2) You were dead in your trespasses and sins.
 - (a) **Ephesians 2:11-12 (ESV) *Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the***

commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

- (b) **1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (ESV)** *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

4. As a component of his confession, Paul expresses the conviction that, on account of the work of God's grace in Christ Jesus, Paul's life is not his own. He is not about Paul anymore but all about Christ.

C. Paul acknowledges his current confession required the commitment of dedicated time spent alone with Jesus.

1. 17 years
 - a. 3 years in the desert
 - b. 14 years in obscure rural ministry
 - c. 17 years
2. Good company
 - a. Moses - 40 years in the desert tending sheep before the burning bush
 - b. David -
 - (1) anointed as a teen, was 30 before coronation
 - (2) intervening years as exile hiding from insanely jealous king
 - c. Jesus
 - (1) 33 years in exile before the cross, death, and his return to glory
 - (2) Hebrews: he was perfected by what He suffered
 - (a) In his humanity, as the representative before God of the entire human race, Jesus was perfected by the things he suffered.
 - (b) Did you think His suffering was only the whipping at the hands of the Romans or the pain of the crucifixion?
 - (c) Imagine (though you really can't) that you are the son of God ever-living in the inexpressible joy and glory of the Father and you come to earth to live surrounded by the godless sin and guilt of humanity.
 - i) Would your heart not break?
 - ii) Would your spirit not suffer?
 - iii) Why do you think Jesus wept at the tomb of

Lazarus?

- (d) Did you think it was not big deal that Jesus emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant and being found in the form of a servant became obedient even unto death?
 - (e) Did you think that was all just a picnic, just a walk in the park, a tiptoe through the tulips?
 - (3) Through the years of his exile, Jesus learned the grace and mercy and compassion and wisdom and rightness of God.
 - (4) He learned what it was like to live as a sinless human in a fallen, sinful world.
3. As Paul prepares us for his confession, he tells us the story of how his confession has come to be.
- a. He tells us of years of public silence spent in the presence of Jesus.
 - b. He tells us of obscurity.
 - c. He tells us of deserts and lonely places.
 - d. He tells us of true but unsupported rumors: he is unknown to the churches of Judea. They only hear stories that the one who once persecuted the faith now preaches it.
4. Paul's zeal for Christ led him into long, intentional seasons of fellowship and instruction from Jesus Himself.
- a. **Disciplined time invested as a personal student of Jesus contributed to Paul's confession.**
 - b. **A crucified confession involves a disciplined commitment.**
 - (1) We need to start seeing some of you in Sunday school and Wednesday night Bible study.
 - (2) Others of you need to begin a regular investigation of Jesus through the word.
 - (3) Still others need to plan and take a break from the ordinary demands of daily routine and spend a measured quantity of disciplined, undistracted time with Jesus.
 - (a) Your faith is weak; your power is gone; your will wanders; and your joy is depleted.
 - (b) Why? Because you are living on spiritual fumes, you are trying to survive on yesterday's blessings.
 - i) That is no way to live.
 - ii) That is not the way God wants you to live.
 - c. Sabbatical reality: You don't press on others what you don't value for yourself.

III. Conclusion

A. Two remaining components for next week

- 1. Paul acknowledges his current confession developed in the context of conflict resolution both within and outside the fellowship of the church.
- 2. Paul acknowledges utter reliance on the grace of God for all that he is in Christ.

B. What is your confession?

1. Are you an independent soldier, lost on the battlefield and trying to make your way in the world alone and on your own terms?
2. Are you a little child standing alone just inside the door of the play yard at McDonald's, amazed and enthralled at being there but no clue what to do next?
3. Are you a sailboat in the storm, upright but adrift and desperately in need of an anchor?
4. Are you a disciple of Jesus, a student committed to studying and knowing the Master so well that you take on the very features of His Person?

C. Your confession starts with the grace of God revealed in the gospel.

1. Your confession starts with God's work in conversion, bringing you by grace alone to faith alone in Christ alone.
2. But conversion is just the beginning.
3. How is your confession developing?