Nevertheless I Live

Gal 2:20  *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

The Man
One day he snapped…

- No one was sure exactly what caused it.
  - There was so much going on,
  - so many things happened
  - it would be impossible to pinpoint the proverbial straw that broke the camels back.
- But the fact remains, His sanity had broken.
  - Friends and family were left alone to try to struggle with this new reality.
  - This friend, father, husband, businessman, upstanding citizen was no more.
- Together they would blame a myriad of things,
  - his love for alcohol,
  - his lack of self-control,
  - his sometimes-violent temper,
  - or his love of money.
- But none of them would scratch the surface of reality.
  - Far below the vices that had plagued the man they once knew were the spirits that drove them.
- Those that were on the outside looking in would never understand how that slowly but surely he had sold his soul to the minions of hell.
  - How his lack of self-control and his often-impulsive behavior had led him to first compromise with and later openly court the darkness and depravity of hell.
  - They would never understand how much he hated what he had become yet how powerless he was to change it.
- The truth is, though, that it cost him everything.
  - His life, his family, his loved ones -- all were lost from him.
    - The business he had inherited from his father,
    - the money he had loved with all of his being,
    - the many fine things he had once owned…
    - All was lost.

After that fateful day when he finally snapped, His life was relegated to living among the tombs;

- he was the wild man that no chains could bind.
  - He was the epitome of evil wearing the skin of a man.
- Everyone was frightened of him;
  - no one cared for him any more.
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• If ever he attempted to venture back into civilization,
  o Back into the society that once had embraced him,
    ▪ they came with their torches and their chains to drive him away.
  o They would chase him back into the hills,
    o back to the graveyard, where he hid among the tombs.
• He made his home with the dead because that’s what he was -- a walking dead man.
  o No future, no hopes, no dreams,
  o not even a coherent thought about what tomorrow might bring.
  o So he hid in the mountains, among the tombs
• And through the long nights and insufferable days
  o he would vent his frustrations and his self-loathing
  o by wailing and sobbing as he cut himself with stones and glass.
• His was an existence as base and bleak as you could get.
  o He had no hope left.
  o He had no dreams of a better future.
  o There was only the continuous present, an oppressing darkness.
  o He hated everything and everyone, but none so much as he hated himself.
    ▪ He hated what he had become.
    ▪ He hated where he had ended up.
    ▪ He hated what his life had turned into.
  o But he found himself powerless to stop it, powerless to change it, powerless to alter the course of his life.

Then one day, it all changed -- the day that Jesus came to town.
• He saw him from afar
  o And when he saw him he felt the tremor of fear that ran through the legion of demons that resided within him.
• Somewhere deep within the vestiges of his lost humanity he recognized deity.
  o Somewhere within the recesses of his mind he understood that in Jesus he had discovered one that was greater than the darkness that bound him.
• And, in an instant, the bright light of hope pierced the continual darkness that had enshrouded his soul.
  o Something stirred within him.
  o Something was touched that hadn’t felt emotion in a long, long time.
  o For the first time in an incredible number of days, he felt hope.
  o For a fleeting instant the though ran through his troubled mind that he didn’t have to live this way anymore.
• And he RAN!
  o He ran like a mad man obsessed.
  o He ran with a singular purpose.
  o He ran to where Jesus was and threw himself at his feet to worship him.
• Yet, even then, the demons struggled to control him.
  o When he would have said words of praise, the bile of hell rose in his mouth and cried out with an unclean voice,
    ▪ “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?
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I implore you by God that you do not torment me.”

- Oh how he struggled within himself to take control of himself and worship this Jesus,
  - But, it was a lost battle for he had long ago sold his soul.
  - No doubt there was an anguish on the inside as he recognized that this special moment might escape him.

- But then it happened, he heard a voice that spoke with heavenly authority.
  - He felt a legion of demons tremble as the voice of the maker of heaven and earth said,
    - "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"
  - The legions within him attempted to reason with the master.
    - Let us enter those swine on the hillside, the cried.
    - Then, in an instant, it was spoken and it was done.

- And EVERTHING changed!

In a single moment his sanity returned.

- In a moment, the life he had lost was given back to him.
  - In a moment, just one moment in the presence of Jesus, everything changed!

- His hopes, his dreams, his future, his life… it was all his again!
  - He had been given a second chance at life,
    - He was given an opportunity to right his wrongs,
    - He was given a chance to live once more as a man unencumbered by his past.

- In that moment he held his whole life in his hands as he contemplated the reality of actually possessing a future again.
  - A million things must have run through his mind as already he began to plan.
    - He would set things right,
    - he would revive the family business,
    - he would repay old debts,
    - he would become an asset to society instead of the menace he had once been.

The bible says that they came and found him sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

- We can only imagine what transpired in those few moments of his life as he sat at the feet of the master.
  - But the multitude was angry.
- They should have been rejoicing.
- They should have celebrated the restoration of the man from the tombs of Gadera.
  - But, instead, the swine were more valuable to them than this man that was now sitting at the feet of Jesus.
- They begged for Jesus to leave their country, and with great sadness he complied.
As Jesus boarded the boat that would take him away from their land, the man, who had just been delivered, faced the most critical moment of his life.

- In that instant he realized that this new life that had just been given to him was less important than the one who had given it to him.
  - In a single moment he considered his new found hopes,
    - his newly revived dreams,
    - this future that had just been given back to him
    - and decided that he would lay it all aside to follow Jesus.
  - In an act of self-sacrifice, he would leave his home and his newly restored family.
    - He would forget about rebuilding the family business,
      - He would lay aside his dreams of establishing a new life.
      - He would relinquish it all, and follow Jesus.
    - Wherever Jesus went, he would go.
    - Whatever Jesus wanted done, he would do.
    - Anything that Jesus required of him, any sacrifice that he might ask, he would gladly do anything for Jesus!

**In that moment: He died!**

- The old man died!
  - He evaluated his life and laid it all on the altar.
  - He held nothing back for himself.
    - As bad as he wanted to renew his acquaintances with friends and family,
    - As bad as he wanted to reestablish the family business
    - As bad as he wanted to restore the honor of the family name
  - He realized that he was willing to surrender it all that he might follow Christ.
    - He realized that nothing in this life was as important to him as being a follower of Jesus!

**It was the same decision that every man must make.**

- It was the call of the cross even before Christ died for our sins.
  - The apostle Paul said it this way, “I am crucified with Christ.”
- So it is with everyone.
  - All who come to Jesus must first encounter the cross.
  - Every man must die to himself.
    - It’s the principle of the cross.
    - It is echoed throughout the scriptures.

*John 12:24-25* Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
When you come to the cross, you come with your life in your hands.
- When you come to Jesus, you come with a willingness to lay everything else aside.
- The only way to eternal life is the crucifixion of this carnal life.
  - You must come to a place where you are willing to say, I give myself to you Jesus.
    - All my hopes, all my dreams,
    - my future, my past,
    - all that I am and all that I ever will be,
    - Lord I give it all to you.
- That’s what repentance is all about.
  - Its about visiting an alter and laying down the old life.
  - Its about bringing the old man to Calvary and crucifying him there.
- Salvation starts at an altar of repentance – It starts at a place of death.
  - Salvation begins where the old man dies.
    - In that moment of repentance as you kneel before an altar, your whole life passes away.
      - The old man is crucified with Christ!
- Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “…If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
  - In order for you to become a new creature, old things have to pass away.
  - In order for you to become a new creature, the old man has to die!

When a man dies, the natural thing to do is to bury him.
- That’s what water baptism is.
- It’s the recognition that the old man has died and needs to be buried.
  - When we go down to the water,
    - we go down to a watery grave,
    - and the old man – the dead man – is buried with Christ Jesus!
  - Romans 6:4 “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death”
    - It’s the recognition that the man I used to be has died!
    - When I bury him, I’m laying down the old life!

The scriptural foundation of the gospel is the death, burial, AND the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- That truth was explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:
  - That’s the gospel.
  - In order to atone for the sins of humanity it was necessary for Christ to suffer death, be buried, AND rise again.
• In repentance, we experience a death to sin and the world.
• In water baptism we are buried with Christ!
• But the gospel doesn’t end there.

• Christ died for our sins and he was buried… But that wasn’t the end of the story.
  o As a matter of fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17 that if Christ had died for our sins and been buried but was never resurrected, then our faith is in vain!
  o Thankfully, that’s not what happened.
• Christ died for our sins, was buried in a borrowed tomb, and on the third day, He rose from the grave with victory!
  o We experience that resurrection in the infilling of the Holy Ghost!
    ▪ What starts with death, culminates in life!
    ▪ What begins with old things passing away, finds is fulfillment in all things becoming new!
      • Old things pass away in repentance.
      • The old man is buried in baptism.
      • And we find newness of life, where all things become new in the infilling, indwelling, gift of the Holy Ghost!
• This is why, in Acts 2:38, when they said, “Men and brethren what shall we do to be saved…”
  o Peter preached to them that they needed to “repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and ye SHALL receive the gift of the Holy Ghost!”
  o This is the gospel!
  o It begins with dying, but it culminates with living.

In the same passage of Galations where Paul said, I am Crucified with Christ, he continues almost in a sense of wonder, nevertheless I live!
• It’s the miracle of the cross.
  o Death produces life!
  o God is calling you to do more than just die for him,
    ▪ he’s calling you to live for him.
• The cross, the conversion, the daily dying -- It’s all about life.
  o It’s about living for God and not for yourself.
    ▪ You give God your hopes your dream your future
    ▪ and God gives it back to you and says Go and live the way that I would!
• Let me tell you what God is looking for,
  o He’s looking for people that are willing to live for him,
    ▪ in every situation,
    ▪ in the face of every circumstance,
    ▪ no matter who they are with!
      • He’s calling a church to LIVE for him!

Let me tell you a story from the Old Testament.
Nevertheless I Live

• There was a man named Naaman, he was a commander of the army of the king of Aram.
  o The bible says that he was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded,
  o because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram.
    ▪ The bible goes so far as to say that he was a valiant soldier, but then it adds a footnote to his life: He had leprosy.
• II Kings tells us that bands of warriors had gone out from Aram and raided in Israel.
  o In the course of their raids they took a young girl captive.
  o This young lady that was violently snatched from her home was thrust into the household of Naaman as a servant to his wife.
  o The bible tells us that when this young lady learned of Naaman’s leprosy she told her mistress,
    ▪ "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

We’ve all heard of how Naaman went, and we know that he overcame his pride to wash in the river Jordan and that in that moment he was healed of leprosy.
• But I’ve come to tell you tonight that perhaps the greatest part of that story has been overlooked.
• The wonder of it all is that a young lady decided to live for God no matter what.
  o When life did her wrong.
  o When she was separated from all that she knew and loved.
  o When no one was watching her or pressuring her to do right,
    ▪ still she lived for God.
  o The wonder of Naaman’s healing is that a captive Jewish girl determined to live for God even in the worst of circumstances.
• She determined to live for him no matter what was going on in her life.

How do you do that?
• How do you live for him when everything seems to be against you?
  o How do you love when you’ve not been loved?
  o How do you offer healing when you’ve been wounded?
  o How do you sow hope to the hopeless?
  o How do you live for God in a cold dark world?
• Paul continued his incredible statement with these words… Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.
  o You must learn to live for him… to let him live in you!
  o I’m still alive, but it’s not my life any longer… it’s his!

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Nevertheless I Live
I was crucified with Christ, and yet I live, but that’s not the end of the story.

- Paul said I’ve realized something incredible about this new life that God has given me.
  - It’s not me living anymore.
  - It is Christ living in me!
  - I am living my life for him!
  - And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live BY FAITH!
    - Paul said it this way, I walk not after the things of this life but I walk by faith!
    - I’m living my life in the faith of God.
    - I’m living my life for the hope of heaven.
- I’m still living down here on this old world.
  - And it’s still my fleshly man that you see.
  - But I’m not living the same life that I was living before.
  - It’s not ME anymore!
  - Christ lives within me!
  - Everything in my life is defined by my faith in Christ, who loved me and gave himself for me!
- God calls every man to the cross, not just to die but, ultimately, to live.
  - After the death of the cross, after the burial of baptism, after the spirit of God comes in to dwell – the life that you now live is different than the life that you lived before.
  - Before it was you – but now it is Christ in you!
  - Before you relied on yourself – but now you rely on Christ!

Close
When the former demoniac of Gaderra realized that Jesus was leaving he followed Jesus all the way to the ship and begged to go with him.

- He surrendered his newfound life, forsaking all else, to follow Jesus!
  - With great conviction he pleaded with the master, “Let me go with you.”
- But Jesus stopped him.
  - He would not permit him to board the boat.
- Instead he told him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.”

He must have been shocked as he discovered a profound truth,

- **I gave my life to Jesus and now He’s giving it back to me!**
  - **He wants ME to LIVE for HIM!**
    - Not just to follow him to lands far away.
    - But to live for him right here at home.
  - The bible says that he went away and began to proclaim to all what Jesus had done for him, and all marveled at what they heard!
God is in this house tonight and He’s looking for someone who is willing to lay down their life that they might find life more abundant.

- Someone who is willing to give their life to Jesus so that Jesus might give it back again!
- Someone who’s willing to live for God.
- Not just to become a follower, but to allow Christ to live in them!
  - God wants to give you back your life tonight.
    - It starts with a death and a burial but it finds its fulfillment in a new life as the Holy Ghost comes in to stay!