

INTRODUCTION

Someone once said there are two kinds of people who work with electricity: One is an electrician and another is a fool. Someone else said the last words of a redneck are, "Hey, watch what happens when I plug this in!"

I'm not an electrician, but I know slightly more than the average person, because when we were building our first home in Alabama in 1981, we put a lot of sweat equity into it. Under the guidance of an electrician in our church, I pulled all the wires for the house and installed all the electrical boxes and light switches.

Most houses are wired for both 110 volts and 220 volts. Your small appliances, lights, and electronics run on 110 volts. But larger units like your air conditioner, stove, and clothes dryer are wired for 220 volts. They produce more energy, so they need more power.

The plugs look different, so you can't accidentally plug a 110 appliance into a 220 outlet. But if you could, it would burn up in a second.

Many international hotels are wired for 220, but the plugs may look the same. I remember the first time I plugged a 110 hairdryer into a 220 outlet. It ran on super speed for a few seconds—wheeeeeeeee—like a turbo-charged hair dryer. Then it started smoking, and it died. Fried forever. On the other hand, if you could plug your 220 stove into a 110 outlet, you would only get one-quarter the output. It would be weak and underpowered; your food would never cook.

There's a spiritual parable in there for us. A person who tries to live the Christian life by his or her own strength is either like that burned-out hairdryer, or the underpowered stove. They surge ahead at a frantic pace for a short burst, and then they burn out. Or they just suffer from a lack of power and never achieve God's intended purpose.

God has wired us for 220: Galatians 2:20. This single verse, which is my life verse, contains the dynamic secret for living the Christian life. Here's God's Life-Changing 220 Principle: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Christopher Columbus didn't INVENT America, he merely discovered it. It was here all along and he just ran into it on his way to India. In my experience, the Christian life is full of wonderful discoveries, too. First, I discovered there was a God who created the universe. Then I discovered this same God loves me so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross for my sins. Then I discovered if I put my trust in Jesus, all my sins could be forgiven and I would have an eternal home in heaven. Those are pretty amazing discoveries!

But then, when I was in college I discovered the Christian life is not ME trying to imitate Jesus, but that Jesus lives in me and wants to live His life through me. One of the most brilliant Christian minds of the 20th century understood this truth. C.S. Lewis wrote: "When Christians say Christ is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. This is not simply a

way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them." (*Mere Christianity*, p. 64.)

Over the next few minutes, I want to dissect this amazing verse and share with you how to apply it to your life. We're going to talk about the executed life, the exchanged life, and the energized life.

1. "I have been crucified with Christ." THE EXECUTED LIFE

Two friends were talking and one said, "Have you seen Sam lately? I've been looking high and low for him." The friend said, "Well, those are the only two places to look, because Sam died last month."

Paul wrote that in Christ, we died. We didn't die physically; we died to self and sin. We have sanitized the cross into a religious symbol. But it was and always will be a mode of execution. It was the lethal injection during the time Paul wrote this. The cross of Christ was a double-cross. First, Jesus was crucified for our sins, and we were crucified with Him. Paul used a past tense verb. He didn't say, "I will be crucified, or I am being crucified." It was something that has already happened. At a murder scene, detectives try to determine the time of death. Paul says our time of death was 2,000 years ago with Christ on the cross. This is not self-crucifixion. It's not a picture of us climbing onto the cross every morning. It's something that has already happened, and we just need to accept it.

In Colossians 3 Paul wrote, "Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:2-3) A dead man isn't interested in the things of this world. Let's take a corpse and prop him on this stage. Ask him if he wants a million dollars, and he won't even give you an answer. Parade an entire column of temptations in front of him: sex, booze, drugs, lying, cheating, stealing, and he won't even give them the time of day. Why? Because he's dead to the allure of sin.

We still have physical life, but when it comes to sin's power over us, we're dead. We still live in the world, but we can't let the world live in us. We're like a boat in the water. The boat is in the water, but if the water gets in the boat, it may sink.

Paul wrote in Romans 6:11 that we are to "reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ our Lord." (NKJV) That's a good Texas phrase: "I reckon." Are you crucified with Christ? Every day you should say, "I reckon so."

We have been crucified with Christ, but every day we must renew our death certificate. Paul faced many dangers but he didn't mind, because you can't hurt a dead man. He wrote, "Why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day—I mean that, brothers." (1 Corinthians 15:30-31)

You can't really scare a dead man. When missionary James Calvert first approached the Fiji islands, which were populated by cannibals, the captain of the ship begged Calvert to turn around. He said, "If you go, you and all of those with you will die at the hands of those savages."

James Calvert said, "We died before we left." He landed and they led thousands of those savages to faith in Christ.

The secret to living the Christian life is dying to self. A sign in the window of a dry-cleaning and dyeing business said: "We dye to live, we live to dye; the more we dye, the more we live; and the more we live, the more we dye."

2. "I no longer live. Christ lives in me." THE EXCHANGED LIFE

Five-year old Katie was taken to the pediatrician with the flu. The doctor examined Katie's ears and to make her feel relaxed she said, "Will I find Big Bird in this ear?" Katie said, "No." Before examining her throat the doctor asked, "Will I find the Cookie Monster in there?" Katie was getting a little impatient and said, "No." The doctor placed the stethoscope on Katie's chest and asked, "Will I find Barney in here?" Katie looked at the doctor and said with honest innocence, "No. Jesus is in my heart. Barney is on my underwear."

Katie was right about that! Jesus can live in your heart. This is sometimes called, "the Exchanged Life." Hudson Taylor, a pioneer missionary to China, made the term, "The Exchanged Life," popular. He struggled for years trying to do the work for God, and finding nothing but failure. Then he discovered the key of death to self and the power of the indwelling Christ. He exchanged his weakness for the strength of Christ, and when he did God started doing amazing things through him.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul used the personal pronouns "I" and "me" seven times. He had an "I" problem, and it had nothing to do with his vision. We all struggle with the same "I" problem. The big "I," our ego always wants to be in control. What's the middle letter in the word "sin?" "I" What's the middle letter of the word "pride?" "I." What's the middle letter in the word "guilt?" The central problem of sin, pride, and guilt, is the big "I." The big "I" is constantly trying to climb back onto the throne in our hearts and displace Jesus. So several times a day, we must renounce self and surrender our will to Jesus.

Our glorious profession of faith should be "Christ lives in me!" Christ with you is good, and Christ for you is fine, and Christ beside you is comforting, but Christ IN you, changes everything. Paul wrote that this is the mystery of God. "To them [believers] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

Christ in you changes your life. Let me illustrate it with a cup of tea. This is only a cup of hot water, but when I drop this teabag in it, it changes the color and the nature of the water. For the water to exist now is for tea to exist. If the water could talk it might say, "It is no longer I (water) but tea lives in me." Not many people drink hot water—there isn't much taste there. But water turned into tea becomes a delicious drink. The tea adds value.

Even so, in the Christian life, Christ in you changes your nature. He changes your life from being bland and boring to be exciting and thrilling.

Sometimes we try to keep "I" alive and we say, "I am going to do the very best I can for Jesus today!" No, the big I needs to die. Let me ask a simple question: Who can live the Christian life better—you or Jesus? Obviously, Jesus can. So then, why are you still trying to let "I" do it?

Gene Edwards wrote: "On the day you quit trying to live the Christian life, then you will finally give Him the freeway to live out in you what is so easy and so simple and so organic for Him to do—live. When you do, you're set free from a long list of do's and don'ts (the do's you can't do; and the don'ts you always do). Why look so shocked? Think about it. You never were any good at living the Christian life."

Some of you shoppers are quite good at making exchanges. If you buy something you don't like, you don't mind standing in line to exchange it. Could you imagine getting in an exchange line with a toy cellphone made of plastic? When you get to the counter you tell them you'd like to exchange that toy for a real iPhone 4S. They would probably look at you like you're crazy and tell you that you can do that if you'll pay a few hundred dollars. But what if you could make an even exchange? Would you take advantage of that exchange? Of course. Well, that's what the exchanged life with Christ is all about.

Let me mention some things you get to exchange. I exchange my weakness for His strength; my ignorance for His wisdom; my prejudice for His love; my anger for His gentleness; my inability for His ability.

Augustine was one of the leading pastors in the early church. He grew up living the wild life of a young man with no regard for sin or righteousness. He was known for his philandering conduct with the women in his city. His Godly mother prayed for his conversion, and Augustine gave his life to Christ as a young adult. He was concerned about how he would react when he was confronted with some of the women who had been a part of his past. He was walking down the street in Milan, Italy when one of the women from his past saw him and greeted him. Augustine ignored her and kept on walking. She called out, "Augustine, Augustine, it is I! It is I!" But Augustine I replied as he walked away, "Yes, I know who you are, but it is no longer I, it is no longer I!"

So this great principle begins with an execution, which leads to an exchange. Then it leads to:

3. "I live by faith in the Son of God." THE ENERGIZED LIFE

There is a massive difference between a person trying to live a good life, and a person who has surrendered to the goodness of Jesus. The truth is that I don't possess enough power, or energy, to live a good moral life.

One of the most famous early Americans was Benjamin Franklin. We all know him as one of our Founding Fathers who was instrumental in winning America's independence and framing our Constitution. He was also an inventor. He didn't invent electricity, but he invented the lightning rod. His other inventions included bifocals, the Franklin stove, and the \$100 bill (not really).

You might not realize it, but Ben Franklin even invented his own personal religion. Franklin was raised in a Puritan Presbyterian family and was baptized at an early age. Based upon his writings, it's clear he was a God-fearing man. However, in his adult years he seldom attended church and he viewed Jesus as a great moral teacher, like Socrates. But he didn't believe Jesus was God in the flesh.

When Benjamin Franklin was a young adult, he established his own religious system to be a good moral person. In his autobiography he wrote: "It was about this time (age 20) I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wished to live without committing any fault at any time. As I knew, or thought I knew, what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other. But I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined... (*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, p. 38.)

Franklin enumerated thirteen moral qualities he tried to attain. He called these his "moral habitudes" (a cross between a habit and an attitude). They included temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility.

Franklin took his personal religion seriously. He had a little book with his thirteen moral qualities written down the left side. Then he had seven columns for the seven days of the week. He would judge himself and if he failed, or needed improvement, he would make a mark in that column. Each week he would erase the marks and start over. He soon found there were so many marks that erasing them tore a hole in the page! He got a new book, and when a page would fill up with marks against his plan, he would tear that page out and start over.

Later in life when he wrote his autobiography, he reflected on the failure of his system. He wrote, "I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it ... In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself. For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility." (*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, p. 38.)

Ben Franklin was a wise, powerful individual. However, he admitted he failed to live a life of perfect moral purity. He could have saved himself a lot of frustration and paper if he had just read and applied Galatians 2:20 to his life. We can NEVER achieve more perfection ourselves. There is only one person who ever lived a perfect life—His name is Jesus.

Instead of inventing 13 moral habitudes, we already have God's list. Galatians 5:22 mentions nine character qualities of the Christian life. They are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

But you don't have to create a checklist and every day try to live up to those character qualities. Those are simply nine words that describe the personality of Jesus. As I allow Jesus to live in me, He energizes those qualities in my life.

Paul identified his source of energy when he wrote, "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom...to this end I labor, struggling with all [my?] his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28-29)

We've all seen the bracelets or stickers that say, "WWJD?" That stands for "What would Jesus do?" This question is actually based on a novel written in 1890 by Charles Sheldon entitled *In His Steps*. It's a fictional account of a group of Christians who started asking themselves a question whenever they faced a moral or ethical dilemma. They would ask, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" Then they would do what Jesus would do.

There's nothing wrong with asking that question, as long as you realize the limitations of your answer. Here's the fallacy of WWJD: It assumes you have the ability to figure out for yourself what Jesus would do in any given situation, then you imitate what Jesus did in that situation. Good luck with that. First of all, how do you KNOW what Jesus would do in any situation? Jesus was always doing the unexpected. He was full of surprises. So to assume you would KNOW what Jesus would do elevates your personal opinion to the level of scripture.

The second problem with WWJD is assuming that if you KNEW what Jesus would do, then you could DO what Jesus did. Think about it: Jesus fed 5,000 hungry people with five loaves and two fish. We know He did it, but it doesn't mean I could do it. He walked on water—I'm not going to try to imitate that!

Here's a better WWJD. What WILL Jesus Do...when I surrender to His life in me? That way I don't have to figure it out for myself. I just let Jesus live in and through me.

Let's use another illustration to explain this truth. Imagine this glove is my life. It was empty, and thus powerless. I could preach to this glove and say, "Glove, pick up that cup! The Bible says, 'Thou shalt pick up the cup,' so do it! Come on, try a little harder!" All the poor glove could say is, "I'm sorry, Lord, I tried my best to pick up the cup. That's all you expect of me, right? For me to try my best for you?" But the Lord says, "There's a better way. I came to live inside you. And what you can never do, I can and will do it through you."

"Lord, I'm trying to love that mean person, but it's hard!" And Jesus says, "Let me love that person through you, it's not hard for me to love them." "Lord, I'm trying to forgive that person who hurt me, but I just can't!" Jesus says, "I can forgive that person through you if you'll just allow me."

CONCLUSION

My favorite part of Galatians 2:20 is the last part that says WHAT Jesus did for us and WHY He did it. Paul wrote, "I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

A seminary class once interviewed a famous theologian. One of the students asked him what the most profound theological thought he had ever encountered was. As he thought for a moment, the students poised with their pens to take down his answer. He said, "The most profound

theological truth I've ever encountered is: 'Jesus loves me; this I know; for the Bible tells me so.'"

One of my friends and mentors in the ministry was Adrian Rogers, who was the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis. I heard Adrian once say that in every person's heart there is a throne and there is a cross. When we are on the cross, then Christ is on the throne, but when we are on the throne, then Christ is alone on the cross.

I once asked Adrian what his secret to being used by God was. He said that every morning, during his quiet time he considered the chair he was sitting in to be an electric chair. Every morning he pushed the 220 button and 220 volts surged through his selfish nature. He said, "I'm a dead man, but Christ lives in me." When he said that I was sort of shocked (no pun intended). It was a reminder to me about the importance of reckoning ourselves dead to sin.

Once I began to understand that Jesus lives in me and wants to love people through me and forgive people through me, and encourage people through me it made a huge difference in my life and ministry. Instead of trying to imitate the life of Jesus, which I found to be impossible, I started learning to simply abide in Jesus. I'm still learning, and there are many times when I still try to operate in my own strength. But if I have ever been a blessing to any of you by what I've said or done, that was not me that was Christ in me.

I heard Stuart Briscoe say he went through four stages in coming to this understanding. When he first became a Christian he said, "Oh, this is easy! All I have to do is to repent and ask Jesus to come into my heart—no problem." But then, as he began to learn what Jesus expected of him his second stage was, "Wow, this is difficult!" He found it wasn't as easy as he first thought. Stage three was when he admitted, "This is impossible!" But after that confession, he discovered the secret of Christ in you—the hope of glory and stage four is, "This is exciting!" What stage are you in now?

Have you allowed the truth of Galatians 2:20 to change your life? Are you wired for 220?

OUTLINE

The Life-Changing 220 Principle: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes