**Me too!**

Text Galatians 2:20

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**Scriptures:** Genesis 15:1-6; Galatians 2

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 95, 444, 439, 438, 106

**Series:** Heidelberg Catechism (LD7Q&A21)

**Theme:** True faith is an individual knowledge, conviction and deep-rooted assurance in the grace of God earned for God’s people by Christ

**Proposition:** True faith is personal

**Introduction**

The ‘Me Too’ movement, is a movement against [sexual harassment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_harassment) and [sexual assault](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_assault) especially in the workplace.It followed soon after [the sexual abuse allegations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Weinstein_sexual_abuse_allegations) against Hollywood film producer [Harvey Weinstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Weinstein). When individuals publicly state that this evil is has affected ‘*not only others, but I too’*, they can be powerful witnesses for change. The ‘me too’ movement is about people personally speaking up about what is **very bad**.

When we witness to others about our personal faith, we speak up about what is **very good.** Notice the language which Heidelberg Catechism LD7Q&A21 uses when defining true faith: “out *of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,* ***not only others, but I too****, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation*”

Our text in Galatians 2:20 is very personal (Paul uses the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘me’ 7 times in this one verse). “*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.”*

We’re going to see how Paul’s personal faith, “me too”, matches the description of ‘true faith’ given in HCLD7Q&A21 under three headings:

1. Personal gospel knowledge
2. Personal gospel conviction
3. Personal gospel assurance
4. **Personal gospel knowledge**

Many years ago, when I was a Sunday school teacher, we used to sing this chorus together as a group at church:

*“It’s no longer I that liveth, But Christ that liveth in me.*

*It’s no longer I that liveth, But Christ that liveth in me.*

*He lives, He lives, Jesus is alive in me!”*

These words come directly from our text today: “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* They are familiar words to many, perhaps all, of us, but what exactly does Paul mean when he writes “I have been crucified with Christ”?

Here are some possibilities:

1. **Literal** – Paul has been crucified on a cross, as Christ had been, but had survived to write this letter. His next words show that this unlikely interpretation is not correct - “It is no longer I who live”.

b) **Emotional** –In contemplating the suffering of Christ, Paul identifies with Jesus through the suffering of his ministry as he does in Phil 3:10 “*that I may…. share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death*”. This interpretation does not explain how Christ lives in him.

c) **Mystical** – Paul’s personality has been replaced by that of Christ so that his body is just a shell which contains the person of Jesus. Paul’s declaration that ‘the life I now live in the flesh’ shows that this interpretation is not right.

Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is his own interpreter here. In chapter 1, he writes to the Galatians about how he had formerly been a violent persecutor of the church. He was a ‘salvation by works’ guy par excellence. ‘*Extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers*’ (1:14). He had plenty of knowledge of the law of God, but not of God’s grace. He was an intensely religious man, but did not know Jesus. But God, he writes, “*was pleased to reveal his Son to me*” (1:16)

When individual people, like Paul, like you, like me, see Jesus for who He is we have personal knowledge of the gospel. Paul writes to Timothy about this saying: “*Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*” (1 Tim 1:13-15)

Paul understood that He had not earned his salvation by any of his attempts to fulfil the law of God, but that he had received mercy from God, undeserving sinner though he was. He expresses this personal knowledge of the gospel, which he shared with the Galatian believers, saying: Look with me at v16: “*yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified*”. To justify here is to declare someone to be right with God (ref. Deut 25:1).

Now we can rightly understand the meaning of his personal testimony in Gal 2:20. By true faith, Paul is united to Christ. Christ’s crucifixion was on his behalf; Christ’s resurrection gives him life. The old Paul, the self-righteous Pharisee whose hope for acceptance by God was entirely based on his strict observance of the law, that Paul is dead. The new Paul has a new identity in Christ, whilst retaining his unique personality within his own body.

Paul knows that his natural independent self, driven by his own desires and ambitions, his old religiosity, is dead. He knows that he now lives a life of believing dependence on the Son of God to whom he willingly gives his complete allegiance. Being saved by grace doesn’t free him up to a life of law-breaking, but rather to a life of trusting in God to change his attitudes and behaviours to match his new identity. Paul didn’t change from being a non-religious person to a religious one, but from someone who followed the dead religion of works to true personal faith in Christ having a personal gospel knowledge.

We could liken personal gospel knowledge to being well acquainted with a parachute. Let me explain!

Did you know that ordinarily, a person intentionally jumping out of an airplane at altitude carries 3 different parachutes? The main parachute, a back-up or reserve parachute, in case the main parachute doesn’t open, and a pilot parachute. The small pilot parachute opens first and pulls the main parachute out. A few of us here may have done some skydiving, even fewer likely have personal knowledge about the details of the three parachutes, their fabric, connection lines. If you were going to use a parachute you’d want to know that it had the necessary parts in good working order before you jumped. Likewise to have true faith in Christ, requires personal knowledge of His person and work.

True faith is a personal knowledge that includes oneself as a beneficiary of the work of Jesus. The HC put it this way “*out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,* ***not only others, but I too****, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation*”

How could we continue and grow this kind of ‘me too’ movement radiating out from this congregation? We could speak more frequently and openly about our personal gospel knowledge. Consider for example, memorizing Gal 2:20 and using that as a personal testimony of your own faith to others…Practice putting your own name into this verse: “*I, David, have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I, David, who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I, David, now live in the flesh I, David, live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

You could then add something along the following lines:

“The church I attend includes many people who have had their sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God and have been grant salvation. Not only others, but I too have been forgiven. How about you? I’d like you to come and inspect the knowledge upon which my faith is based so that you can meet Jesus who lives in me. Why don’t you come to a church service with me, or a small group meeting, like one of our regular Bible study/fellowship groups?”

I have a pair of running shoes which I have found to be really good, I love to share what I’ve learned about what makes them such a great design. How much more personal knowledge of the gospel!

1. **Personal gospel conviction**

A conviction is a deeply held belief. It takes conviction to voluntarily jump out of an airplane at altitude with a parachute strapped to your back. What is the deeply held belief here? That this device of fabric and cord would slow your rate of descent sufficiently that you could survive such a great fall without injury? Those who don’t believe strongly in the effectiveness of parachutes do not take up skydiving!

Likewise, those who don’t believe strongly in the Bible do not take up a life of true faith in Christ. The HC helpfully notes that true faith must include a ‘conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true’. The Apostle Paul was personally convicted about the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.

He recounts for the Galatians a confrontation with the apostle Peter. Peter had been one of the 12 disciples of Jesus, one of the ‘inner circle’ of three who had been there at Christ’s transfiguration, together with James and John (Matt 17:1). Peter was highly regarded in the early church being the chief spokesman of the Jerusalem church (Acts 1-12). Peter was the Apostle to whom God gave a vision of a great sheet descending from heaven with all kinds of animals, reptiles and birds which were designated as unclean in the Old Testament. God commanded Him to eat these creatures thereby showing that the old divisions between what was ceremonially clean and unclean had been removed by the completed work of Christ. After this he speaks publicly saying: “*Truly I understand that God shows no partiality*” (Acts 10:34). Peter then began to eat with gentiles, sharing food with them.

However, when he came to Antioch, as Paul relates to the Galatians in 2:11-14, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles because he feared the Jews who were pushing for these non-Jewish believers to be circumcised in accordance with OT law. Paul was there too at Antioch and saw the danger of a church leader portraying a message of salvation by obeying the OT law. Now Paul understood the OT very well, having been educated by in Jerusalem by Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), a very knowledgeable Pharisee. After his conversion, Paul was convicted that Jesus Christ is the Anointed One of God to whom all the Old Testament patterns and types point.

Because of this, he was convicted that Peter’s conduct in separating himself again from the gentiles was ‘*not in step with the truth of the gospel’.* So he opposed Peter ‘to his face’. This was no small thing, to confront a man of Peter’s standing in the church. But Peter had lapsed into behaviour which was not in keeping with true faith due to pressure from the ‘circumcision party’. (There are some similarities here with his denial of Jesus after his arrest when he felt pressure from two servant girls and some bystanders in a courtyard (Matt 26:69-75))

True faith is not only a personal knowledge of the gospel, but also a personal conviction that God’s Word is true. Personal conviction, a deeply held belief, is evident in the way a person lives, as it was in Paul’s life when he courageously confronted Peter.

Paul writes to the Galatians: “*And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,”.* In his earthly life, Paul sought to live out the personal conviction which was a key aspect of his faith in the Son of God.

Brothers and sisters, how could our personal gospel conviction that God shows no partiality be evident in our lives? Here are some suggestions:

* Continue to be friendly and pursue fellowship with those who have a different ethnic/cultural background to you share a meal with them. This is what Peter didn’t do in Antioch.
* Strive hard to incorporate others in this congregation into the life of the church, into the various ministries of service. Invite some of our newer church members to serve alongside you in what you do. This demonstrates that you are personally convicted by the gospel of grace and its equal inclusion of all kinds of people.
* Do not expect others to serve in the same ways many of us do. We don’t expect ‘newcomers’ to undergo a surgical procedure as the ‘circumcision party’, but we can exclude others from the body life of the church by expecting them to serve in the same ways we have done, perhaps faithfully for many years.

True faith involves personal gospel knowledge and personal gospel conviction, together with:

1. **Personal gospel assurance**

I remember skydiving in England many years ago. I have photographs of our group before our first jump. A bunch of worried looking newbies! We had gone through an intensive training course to learn about parachuting. We had the necessary knowledge. I don’t think we were worried by an uncertainty about whether parachutes actually work, but rather the question was “will mine work on this particular jump for me”. It’s all very well knowing how parachutes work. It’s all very well having a deeply held belief that they do enable people to drop from the sky and return to earth without death or injury. It’s another thing to actually jump confidently out of a plane with one!

Gospel assurance, like confidence before a parachute jump, is personal! This confident faith is able to say “the blood of Jesus really was shed for **me too**”. A key aspect of true faith is a personal confidence in Jesus. The HC mirrors describes it this way “true faith…*is also a deep-rooted assurance created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God and have been granted salvation*”

Paul ends his personal testimony in Gal 2:20 with the words: “*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.”* If Paul was a parachutist for Christ, you could say, he’s already jumped. He was confident that Jesus would keep him safe. As he writes this letter to the Galatians, he is living the life of faith. Why? Because of this personal gospel assurance about Jesus “*who loved me and gave himself for me”.*

This is not a general statement about God saving a people for himself like John 3:16 for example: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. This is more like the focus of the lyrics of the Ronald Payne / Ronny Hinson song “When He Was On the Cross, I Was On His Mind”. You may not be familiar with the lyrics, so here’s the first part:

“*I'm not on an ego trip I'm nothing on my own I made mistakes I often slip   
Just common flesh and bones   
But I'll prove someday just why I say   
I'm of a special kind   
For when he was on the cross   
I was on his mind*”.

Now there’s a thought. You and me, brothers and sisters, as yet unformed, yet chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, in the mind of Jesus as he bled and died at Calvary. Possible you ask? Absolutely.

Paul was confident that Jesus loved him, although he was ‘chief of sinners’ (1 Tim 1:15). Paul was confident that Christ gave himself up to shame, condemnation, scourging, the crown of thorns, mockery, crucifixion and abandonment by his Father, death and burial ‘not only for other, but for me too’.

When you read the gospels what do you see about the love of Jesus? It is personal. He meets people at their point of need. He has time for them:

* The Samaritan woman at the well.
* Despised tax collector Zacchaeus up a tree.
* The woman with the flow of blood (Mark 5.34)

He treats each one as a person made in the image of God yet broken.

If you then have true faith, being assured that Jesus loved you and gave himself for you, then how could you love like Him? Here are some suggestions:

* Purposefully, intentionally, linking up with someone else in the congregation and talking about your own faith. By God’s grace there are plenty of people here to choose from!
* Perhaps speaking of times when you have had doubts and how the Lord has strengthened you to overcome these and to grant you increased assurance of salvation.

I am so thankful that we already have a ‘me too’ movement in this church. I believe that our Lord is using this to gather his church and He invites us to join Him in this wonderful work.

AMEN