

## The meaning of the Cross – Part III

(Practical and application aspects)

*Gal 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory, excepting in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.*

Our scripture reference above is filled with meaning. Unfortunately not too many Christians know by experience, what the author was talking about. We have all at some time run ardently after the things the world considers important; legitimate as these things may be. Materialism, self esteem and acceptance by the world – which by the way is arrayed against the Lord and His Word – has gripped so many. The author tells us that his striving was for quite the opposite. To society in general he was an “oddball”. God grant us in these last days a radical increase in “oddballs” of this caliber.

The Apostle Paul who we believe was the human author of the letter to the Galatians, from which our scripture reference is drawn, says the following:

- He took joy and glory in the Cross of Christ. He made it clear that this was the ONLY thing he took glory in. In another place he said that everything else was worthless. What he at one time considered gain was actually detrimental to his future and spiritual well-being. He said in **Philippians 3:8** *“This is true, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but garbage, that I may gain Christ”*. I think he meant this both physically and spiritually speaking.
- He said by the Cross of Christ, the world was crucified to him. Crucifixion and all it entailed ended in death. So basically, Paul is saying that everything in the world as to its allure and what it has to offer were as it were dead to him. There was nothing it had to offer that he desired. Everything it (the world) had to offer paled in comparison to what he had in Christ. His ambition was for more of Christ – not more of the world. **Philippians 3:10** *“that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; “*
- He said he was crucified as far as the world was concerned. Meaning what? **To the world he was of no value or consequence**. The world considered him a lost cause. He was being a thorn in their sides. Bugging them with something they wanted nothing of. He was in no way promoting or contributing to the godless world’s aims and ambitions. He was not a revolutionary trying to bring down human governments and institutions, but seeking the revolution of man’s spiritual condition. By the way, when man’s spirit has been revolutionized, there will follow a revolution for good in society. Godliness, justice, peace, true harmony and prosperity for all will follow.

We will follow the outline below:

- i) We have been crucified with Christ.
- ii) We are buried with Him in water baptism.

- iii) We are resurrected (risen) with Him – to walk in newness of life, *Col 3:1* *If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.*

## **I) We have been crucified with Christ**

This is an accomplished fact. It happened 2000 years ago on a lonely windswept hill of God-forsakenness; when the Son of God was crucified and died as a substitute for the entire sinful human race. The penalty for sin was and is death. Jesus was sinless and perfect; and not subject to this. What happened was a tremendous miracle – He died. The Father *“made Him to be sin for us; who knew no sin, that...”* As our substitute, He suffered every penalty for every sin committed since creation. Isaiah prophetically declares: *“... on Him was laid the iniquity of us all..”*.

*Gal 2:20* *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives 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.*

*1Co 1:18* *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are saved it is the power of God.*

*Rom 6:6* *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that from now on we should not serve sin.*

*Rom 6:7* *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

*Gal 5:24* *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

There was only one thing God could do with the old man or Adamic nature – crucify it. Hence, when Christ Jesus died on the cross 2000 years ago, he died as the representative of humanity (“Last Adam” *1Co 15:45*), and as such we all died. Judgment for sin had been executed. God could now forgive and accept anyone who came in faith believing and accepting His free gift of forgiveness and salvation.

*Rom 6:7* *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

*Col 3:3* *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Consider some facts about dead people:

- they have no life or consciousness
- they cannot be hurt or harmed
- they don't respond to stimuli
- they are not aware of anything

## **II) Baptism - Dead people must be buried**

We will not spend an extended time on this topic, except to supply a few scripture references and offer a few comments:

*Rom 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

*Col 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead.*

*1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

Water baptism doesn't have some magical property, but is a public declaration of what has happened in the heart and life of the new believer. Many heresies have arisen out of misunderstanding water baptism. This is a subject for future study, but we make the following statements:

- Regeneration (being born-again) doesn't happen when the new believer is baptized in water. This heresy is called "baptismal regeneration". Only "Born-again" people are to be baptized.
- Water baptism is for believers who understand clearly it's place in God's salvation plan – child baptism is NOT scriptural
- No human administered rite or ritual can change a man's heart. In fact under the New Testament dispensation, the true church of Jesus has:
  - no priesthood (all believers are priests)
  - no temple – merely places to meet for fellowship and declaration of the Word of God
  - no rituals, no rites, no holy days, no holy places, no icons, no hierarchy, no universal human head, no venerated "Saints" et al.
- Water baptism is an external view of an inward grace.

### **III) We are to live a crucified/resurrected life**

By this we mean a life of deadness towards the world and flesh, and a resurrected life spiritually – which will affect every aspect of our walk in the world. It is achieved by "Walking in the Spirit". This is the main idea put forward in our scripture above.

Bearing the Cross (living a crucified life), means suffering, persecution, rejection, being misunderstood, giving up personal ambition, losing ones life, becoming a slave with no rights, not taking vengeance even when it seems justified, but leaving it to God. It means having the "world crucified unto you". It means being "crucified unto the world". How then could Paul say he gloried or delighted in the cross?

Jesus said "He that loses his life will find it". What did he mean? Lose your soul-life or self-life and find true life. Bearing the Cross means walking in "another world". Another realm, that the world knows nothing of – a parallel universe if you will. A universe where there is no sin. Where God's will is done by all inhabitants of that universe. "In the world but not of the world". This realm is spiritual – Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world".

Resurrection can and does ONLY follow after death.

**Gal 5:16** *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

**Gal 5:17** *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would.*

**Gal 5:18** *But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

**Gal 5:19** *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,*

**Gal 5:20** *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

**Gal 5:21** *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

**Gal 5:22** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

**Gal 5:23** *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

**Gal 5:24** *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

**Gal 5:25** *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

A number of interesting points arise out of this scriptural selection:

- We can live free from fleshly control, hence free of sinfulness; but **ONLY** as we walk in the Spirit. The moment we consciously step out of the spirit and into the flesh; we find the old habits and sinful ways very much still there. Constant walking “in the spirit” tends to “re-program” us – like re-taping. Gradually overcoming the sinful pull – this is sanctification.
- There is a conflict between the fleshly sinful nature and the new spiritual nature
- The works of the flesh are enumerated. We are told that those doing these things cannot inherit God’s Kingdom – nothing to do with eternal life. Rather walking in the flesh does not make one “lose his salvation” as some teach; but causes one to miss the benefits of the Kingdom of God NOW. We experience a deadness now.
- The fruit produced by walking in the Spirit are enumerated. Not as a law we are to obey, but a mirror to indicate where we are walking. We have two dimensions in which we can choose to walk. God will not overrule our choices; however He will bring outside pressure to bear to influence us to walk in His realm of the Spirit.

**Rom 6:1** *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

**Rom 6:2** *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

**Rom 6:3** *Don’t you know, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

**Rom 6:4** *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

In the above scripture selection we find encapsulated the practical working of the Cross of Christ in our lives;

- We are dead to sin. As noted above in some things about dead people; “dead people do not respond to stimuli”. Sin no longer holds the power over us it once held. We can live a sinless life; but as noted above, **ONLY** as we “Walk in the Spirit”.
- We were baptized into Christ’s death. Note that this was a once-only, never-to-be-repeated event. Death comes only once to a person. We cannot resurrect the “Old-man”. Many dear, well-meaning saints teach that we can be lost and re-saved numerous times. A clear understanding of what God has done for us dispels these beliefs.
- We are buried with Him in baptism. Please note that God the Father never died on the Cross – yet He that died was God. The Holy Spirit never died on the Cross – yet He that died was offered up through the Holy Spirit. It was the man Jesus Christ who died, was buried and rose again. Hence water baptism is administered to the new saint in the “Name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. This has nothing to do with any beliefs one holds with respect to the Godhead. Only Jesus died and we are baptized into His death.
- We are raised with Him in resurrection (physical resurrection not in view here – that is future). We thus walk in a new life.

**Rom 6:7** *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

**Rom 6:8** *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

**Rom 6:9** *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him.*

**Rom 6:10** *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God.*

**Rom 6:11** *Likewise reckon also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Rom 6:12** *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

**Rom 6:13** *Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin: but yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

**Rom 6:14** *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.*

Christ’s history becomes our history. In **Rom 6:11** the word “reckon” is an accounting term. To “reckon” one has a million dollars in the bank when you are penniless is very poor accounting practice, if not illegal. However, God declares Christ’s history to be ours – put to our credit. It is now possible for us to declare boldly and legally:

- I am free from sin – thus no longer under God’s wrath and judgment.

- I am alive to God – thus have a “God-awareness”; something the un-regenerate unbeliever does not have.

**Rom 7:14** *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

**Rom 7:15** *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.*

**Rom 7:16** *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.*

**Rom 7:17** *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

**Rom 7:18** *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

**Rom 7:19** *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

**Rom 7:20** *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

**Rom 7:21** *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

**Rom 7:22** *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*

**Rom 7:23** *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

**Rom 7:24** *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

**Rom 7:25** *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

**Rom 8:2** *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

**Rom 8:8** *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

**Col 3:1** *If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.*

**Col 3:2** *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

**Col 3:3** *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

These scriptural references declare and reveal what every child of God has struggled with. “If I am a child of God, ***WHY DO I DESIRE AND DO THE THINGS I REALLY DO NOT WANT TO DO AND KNOW I SHOULD NOT DO???***”

Note the following in the above scriptures;

- The Law is spiritual, but “I” (ego, id, self etc) am carnal; sold to sin.
- If you are a child of God, you cannot continue enjoying sinful practices. We know what is right, but somehow keep doing the opposite.
- The source of the problem is not the new “I”, but the sin principle that is in our fleshly nature. Yes, we do have two natures – to keep the “Old-man” under

control and “dead” – walking “in the Spirit” is the solution. Realizing that in the flesh “dwells no good thing”.

- Paul cries “Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?” The answer is Jesus. Every problem, sinful desire, Oppression etc etc are solved by the Lord Jesus Christ. **Rom 8:2** – the “Law of the Spirit of life” sets us free from the “law of sin and death”. Life always supersedes death.
- **Colossians 3:1,2,3** gives us the solution from another viewpoint.
  - we are risen with Christ
  - seek what’s above where Christ is seated – in heaven
  - set affections heavenward
  - we or “I” am dead – now hidden with Christ in God.

**Eph 2:5** *Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;)*

**Eph 2:6** *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

- View yourself as already arrived! We are free, free, free! Look at everything from your exalted position in Christ in the Heavens.

## **How to know when we walk “in the flesh”**

- Deadness in church meetings.  
The Church has lost the sense of the Divine Presence; because of carnality. It may or may not be sinful practices, but merely running the Church as a human social or charitable society. Some churches have called in secular consultants to assess why they have no success in their endeavors. No wonder the glory has departed!

**Psa 127:1** *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman awakes but in vain.*

**Mat 16:18** *..... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

ALL our efforts are as “wood, hay and stubble” when attempted in the flesh or by using worldly methods.

Everything we do, whether secular or not, MUST be done in reliance upon the spirit of God. “Do everything as unto the Lord”. It takes GOD to be a MAN. We should be supernaturally natural and naturally supernatural.

- Uneasiness within

**Col 3:15** *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be thankful.*

Let the peace of God “rule” or “be the umpire” in your heart. Walking in the flesh brings a sense of uneasiness within. This uneasiness goes beyond mere mental anguish. Mentally we may justify our actions or thoughts – yet the uneasiness remains. STOP! Ask the Lord – until the peace is restored. What you’ve done or plan to do may be

completely legitimate – yet you feel uneasy. It may be that this is NOT the direction or will of God for your life. However may simply be that you are relying only on your intellect and “talents”. Remember the root of carnality is SELF. Rather yield your plans and ambitions to the Lord. Let Him be your teacher and guide through the Holy Spirit. If it is what God wants for you – the peace is immediately restored.

- Spousal relationship.

Our spouses belong to the Lord – not us. Commit them to God to change and do not try by fleshly, natural and human means to change them. I was once given good advice by a family member who has now gone to his reward. He said, **“Marriage is like a triangle with God at the top and you (husband and wife) at the base corners. The closer you move up to the Lord, the closer you move together”**. Very profound but true.

As the Lord draws each one closer to Him, we come closer together.

- Spiritual indifference in ones personal life

The scriptures tell us that there is a conflict between the spirit and the flesh.

***Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would like.***

When walking “in the flesh” we become cold and indifferent to things of the Spirit. One may even feel like “I have lost my salvation”. Our actions and thoughts seem so contrary to what we know is proper.

I remember a brother years ago in South Africa that was a member of the Church Choir in which I was also a member. He was a fairly new Christian and didn't know much of the truth of God's word. Unfortunately, neither did the pastor of that church – nor I for that matter. This young brother seemed to have some inner struggle. One day he said to me that he was a hypocrite. He quit the choir and church and I never saw him again. What a tragedy! All he needed was the truth about walking in the spirit. He felt the indifference within, and felt he was merely practicing the part. There are so many children of the Lord in many churches that face the same conflicts daily. They continue “acting” the part yet hide deep inner spiritual anguish and pain. They feel they are unacceptable to the Lord – and of course our enemy satan is always willing to oblige and encourage that misconception – thus rendering them ineffective in the Kingdom of God.

***“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free!”***

Lord send us preachers and teachers to declare the truth!

## **Bible instances of “walking in the flesh”**

One of the great beauties of the Word of God is that the record never covers up or denies the failures of Old or New Testament saints. Sins are exposed, dealt with, forgiven and the sinners restored. Thus we can take courage in that we too can be restored and forgiven when we fail.

David, Peter & Paul – examples of walking in the flesh.

- David, the “sweet psalmist of Israel”

**2 Samuel 11** recounts David’s sin. It involved an affair with a married woman and murder of the husband when he discovered she was pregnant by his actions. This is as much a plot as any modern Hollywood movie.

David was called “a man after God’s own heart”??? How could this be? It was because he knew how to repent, and put his faith in the Lord.

- Peter was guilty of denying the Lord with cursing. Of hypocrisy:

**Mat 26:69** *Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a young woman came to him, saying, You also were with Jesus of Galilee.*

**Mat 26:70** *But he denied before them all, saying, I do not know what you are talking about.*

**Mat 26:71** *And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.*

**Mat 26:72** *And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.*

**Mat 26:73** *And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely you also are one of them; for your speech betrays you.*

**Mat 26:74** *Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.*

**Mat 26:75** *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, you will deny me three times. And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

The great Peter – who later boldly stood up on the day of Pentecost and preached boldly about Jesus – failed miserably under his own power. Even after three years of walking, talking and ministering with Jesus, he was still a hopeless failure – in himself. So guess what? There’s hope for you and I as well.

**Gal 2:11** *But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

**Gal 2:12** *For before that certain people came from James, he ate with the Gentiles: but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.*

**Gal 2:13** *And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

Peter walked and acted very hypocritically here.

- Paul showed fleshly conflict with fellow ministers.

**Act 15:36** *And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brothers in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.*

**Act 15:37** *And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.*

**Act 15:38** *But Paul did not think it was good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and did not go with them to the work.*

**Act 15:39** *And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;*

Evidently a young disciple John Mark had failed in ministry. Now the “Great Apostle of Grace” acting very un-graciously, ending up in a “sharp” division between him and fellow preacher Barnabas. Many years later, Paul made a complete turnaround regarding Mark:

**2Tim 4:11** *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

## **Concluding comments**

True freedom is: **John 8:32** *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

We need the freedom that comes from knowing the truth of God’s Word and learning to live it – “being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only”.

**Pro 3:5** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and don’t lean on your own understanding.*

**Pro 3:6** *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.*

**Pro 3:7** *Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

**Pro 3:8** *It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones.*

May we also glory in the Cross as we progress on our Christian Pilgrimage – finding in Jesus everything we need.

### **Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, thank-you for Jesus. Thank-you for the cross. Thank-you for a finished work. Thank-you for giving us your Holy Spirit to lead and guide us into all truth.

Lord be our teacher. Quicken the word and above teaching to us, that we may walk worthy of our vocation in Christ.

Thank-you that you will complete in us what you have begun.

In Jesus-Name

Amen