

## “THE CRUCIFED FLESH”

Text:           **Galatians 5:24**  
Reading:       **Galatians 5:16-26**

Sermon preached on March 22, 2009 by:

Pastor Jon Cardwell  
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church  
5440 Alabama Highway 202  
Anniston, AL 36201  
<http://sgbcanniston.wordpress.com/>

INTRODUCTION: Our primary focus today will be on one verse, [**v24**].

I.       **BACKGROUND:** This epistle was written by the apostle Paul to the Christian believers in the province of Galatia, a province in the Roman Empire; it was not a city, but a region. The letter was believed by many scholars to be written from Rome while Paul was in prison. When the believers in Galatia were deceived by the false doctrines of the Judaizers; that is, false-teaching Jews were telling these Gentile believers that unless they were circumcised they weren't truly Christians, the Holy Spirit masterfully presents an amazing expression of grace.

A.       Through the apostle Paul, the gospel of grace is defended in **chs. 1 & 2**; presenting the apostle's testimony of having received the gospel from the Lord by divine revelation, his credentials as a Jew's Jew who knew exactly what he was talking about when it came to the Law of Moses, his approval from the Jerusalem leadership, & his boldness to confront even Peter when he & Barnabas were swept away by the zealous, but legalistic Judaizers.

B.       Next, the gospel of grace through justification by faith is explained in **chs. 3 & 4**; presenting the prophetic allegories in the life of Abraham, the fulfillment of the curse of the Law in the Cross of Christ, the purpose of the Law to point to faith, the blessings of faith, & the incompatibility between the Law and faith. The nature of sinful man is to justify himself, either in his own eyes or before the eyes of a holy God, but because man is sinful, He can never be justified in himself or by himself. Man can only be justified by

a supernatural act of God, the supernatural power of God, & the eternal declaration of God.

C. Finally, the gospel of grace is applied in **chs. 5 & 6**; as the believer is exhorted to remain steadfast in his liberty in Christ, to practice brotherly love, to walk in the power of the Spirit & not the lusts of the flesh, & to persevere in the gospel of grace.

II. [v24a] “They that are Christ’s...” Who does the apostle speak of here? These are those whom the Lord has declared justified because of faith in Christ’s substitutionary atonement; that Christ knew no sin (**2 Cor 5:21**), & as the sinless substitutionary Sacrifice for sinful men, & as the obedient substitutionary Righteousness of unrighteous men, God has declared the sinner who has saving faith in Jesus Christ to have forgiveness through Christ’s shed blood & stand righteous before a holy God as if he possessed ALL of Christ’s righteousness. Last week, we found that the Bible calls that IMPUTATION.

A. “They that are Christ’s” have been redeemed, purchased with a price so costly, so valuable by the atoning death of Jesus Christ, that had Adam never sinned, & every man, woman, & child lived righteous lives eternally, their value would never match the precious Sacrifice of the only Son of God. The love of the Father to send His Son to suffer the full wrath of God for sin, & the love of the Son to willingly lay down His life for His sheep was so infinitely pure that all that is holy in all God’s created universe could never compare to the worth & riches of what the Triune God has done on Mount Calvary 2,000 years ago.

ARE YOU CHRIST’S? Jesus of Nazareth suffered the torments of hell, like no man will ever know when He hung on Calvary’s Tree, crying “Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachtani,” quoting **Ps 22:1** in Aramaic, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” ARE YOU CHRIST’S? When the Gospel of the crucified Lord was preached, did the supernatural power of God prick your heart to recognize that compared to His righteousness, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; that there is no salvation apart from Him; AND there can be no peace for your soul until you have Christ & Christ alone? ARE YOU CHRIST’S? When you heard that, in Adam’s fall, that sinful man is so totally & is so

utterly guilty, standing eternally condemned before a holy God, that the only hope of salvation was for God Himself to become a man & pay the penalty for the sins that you & I have committed, every righteous deed omitted, & every thought, word, & deed that failed to give God glory; when you heard, were you awakened, born-again, & trusting in Christ, filled with faith in Him? ARE YOU CHRIST'S?

III. There are many today that might suggest that they are Christ's; that they are saved, & as I've mentioned time & again, Jesus said that in that day many will say to Him, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" And then Jesus will profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (**Mt 7:22-23**).

A. So, how does one know that he or she has been saved by God's grace & that you haven't simply responded emotionally to some hyped-up sermon or some feel-good-about-yourself, be-a-better-you bunch of phoney-baloney? Do you know because you said some prayer, as if those words had something magical in them? NO! Do you know you're saved because you hit the old sawdust trail & went forward at some revival meeting or Bible camp? NO! You know because the Bible tells us right here [**v24a-b**]. Those whom God has saved have crucified the flesh! "Alright, Bro. Jon, what does that mean?" I'm so glad you asked because I'm going to tell you.

B. When we are saved by God's sovereign grace, made new creatures in Christ, God declares us forgiven thru the blood of Jesus Christ & declares us righteous because of the sinless, obedient life that Christ lived as a Man upon the planet; and not only does God declare us justified for the sake of His goodness & justice, He also declares us sanctified, as if we had the holiness of Jesus in order to stand in the holiness of a holy heavenly Father. Yet, because we have only been declared righteous & declared holy, our remaining corruptions as sinners must be crucified. One of the Biblical terms for these corruptions is "flesh."

C. What is the flesh that is spoken of here? The text we read this morning tells us [**vv19-20**]. The "works" of the flesh; that is, those acts, actions, deeds, the Greek word  $\epsilon\rho\gamma\alpha$ — yet, we see only some of them listed by the apostle as he writes, "...and such like"

(v20). God's Word says that those who "do," (προσσωτες), that is, to practice, to habitually accomplish or perform repeatedly "such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." Why? Because they have not crucified the flesh! Why have they not crucified the flesh? Because they were never saved in the first place! They may have had some experience that moved them to what the Puritans called "temporary believers." They had an external religion that was not the internal reality of God's saving grace.

D. CAVEAT. This doesn't mean that someone who is truly & really saved supernaturally by God's grace does not fall or fail & commit one of these acts... or such like. Yet, if we are truly saved, then when we have committed an act of the flesh, we are grieved because we grieve the Spirit of God, we are sorrowful & truly repentant because we have saddened our heavenly Father, & by that act, have broken fellowship with Him. But if we have done such things, "They that are Christ's" have forgiveness in Christ: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9); for "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 Jn 2:1).

E. "Bro. Jon," you may say, "I believe I'm a true, Biblical, saved by God's grace Christian, but I often find myself falling or failing just like you mentioned." That's why our text says that we have crucified the flesh "WITH THE AFFECTIONS & LUSTS."

Affections could be translated "passions," but (παθημασιν), it more accurately should be called "an emotional influence." Paul writes to the church at Rome & says, "For when we were in the flesh, the **motions** of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom 7:5); which, emotional, passionate expression of submission to sin, caused him to cry out, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing... For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:18-19, 24).

Lusts (επιθυμιας) can be translated "desire" & more accurately here, "forbidden longings" or "forbidden pinings." We swayed by the flesh in either one of these 2 ways:

in an emotional response or by desire of thought. James tells us, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren” (**Jas 1:14-16**). At the end, James provides us some counsel, “Do not err,” In other words, do not roam, do not wander. We need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (**2 Cor 10**).

IV. Who must crucify this flesh? “They that are Christ’s.” As I mentioned last week with regard to saving faith, this isn’t some pull-yourself-up-by-your-own-bootstraps mentality or attitude. This is the supernatural product, the “fruit of the Spirit” (using the Biblical language of **Gal. 5**). This comes forth from the saving reality of the new, born-again life in Christ. If God has saved me, & I am a new creature in Christ, then my desire is to please God: **2 Tim 2:4**, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” When God has saved us by His sovereign grace, He has enlisted us into spiritual combat, waging war with the flesh as spiritual beings. We read that this war, this conflict is a reality within the life of the believer [**v17**].

A. Experimental/experiential sanctification. In Christ, & by His supernatural power to uphold us, & the Holy Spirit’s power to transform us & conform us to the image of Christ, this is the fulfillment of God’s command, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (**Lev 11; 19; 20; Amos 3:3; 1 Pet 1:15-16**)

B. Denying Self, taking up Cross. **Mt 16:24**; I am crucified with Christ **Gal 2:20**, but we’ll look at more practical aspects concerning this next week.

C. It is given to us because in a real sense, now we have power to allow our flesh to get down off the Cross. Remember the Malefactor that hung on the Cross next to Christ: “If Thou be Christ, save Thyself & us” (**Lk 23:39**). Just as a sinner tempts Christ to disobedience, to come down from the Cross, so does the body of sin tempt us to remove our flesh from the Cross of Christ to disobey.

D. AND... this is done by the power of God according to the reality of the work that

God has wrought in us by His saving grace (**Phil 2:13**).

V. QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES:

- A. Are we in Christ? Is it Christ's Work upon the Cross that makes it so?
- B. Is my flesh crucified? Or are my good works a whim of my desire to be outwardly good, rather than inwardly true?
- C. Am I grieved when I sin because it grieves a holy & loving heavenly Father?
- D. Do I care what the world thinks? Or do I care about what Christ thinks because He's the one who died for me?