

Title: **THREE CROSSES - THREE CRUCIFIXIONS**
 Text: Luke 22:32-43
 Subject: *Spiritual Significance of the Three Crosses*
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Introduction:

I have no use for any idolatrous paintings or pictures of our Savior. But Rembrandt's greatest and most dramatic etching, "Three Crosses," is the artist's attempt to show the moment of our Savior's his death on the cursed tree at Golgotha. Massive beams of light slice through the darkness. The light focuses on Christ and the two malefactors, as if Rembrandt meant to suggest that there is no understanding of the meaning of those three crosses and those three crucifixions, except by heavenly light.

In Galatians 6:14 the Apostle Paul speaks of three crucifixions. He speaks of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the crucifixion of the world, and his own crucifixion.

(Galatians 6:14) "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Then in Colossians 2:14 the inspired Apostle tells us that we are complete in Christ because, when he died upon the cursed tree as our Substitute, our blessed Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, took the law "*out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*"

(Colossians 2:9-17) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (11) In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: (12) Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. (13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; (14) Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (15) *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (16) Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ."

Proposition: When our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, God's elect were crucified with him, the law was crucified, and the world was crucified.

What does all that mean? Let's read Luke 23:32-43 together. As we look at the scene before us on Mt. Calvary again, I want us to look specifically at the spiritual significance of the three crosses on Calvary. The title of my message is **THREE CROSSES — THREE CRUCIFIXIONS**.

(Luke 23:32-43) "And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. (33) And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. (34) Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. (35) And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. (36) And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, (37) And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. (38) And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. (39) And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. (40) But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? (41) And we

indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. (42) And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

OUR SAVIOR’S CRUCIFIXION

Let me begin by talking to you about the crucifixion and death of our blessed Savior. Then, I want to show you something of the spiritual significance of the three crosses. More than two thousand years ago, about 30 A.D. the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our blessed Savior was crucified between two thieves upon Mt. Calvary, just as it was prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. We have read the historic account of it in Luke 23. Let me, once more, remind you what our dear Redeemer experienced and did at Calvary.

- **Hanging upon the cursed tree, he was made sin for us** (Isa. 53:4-8; Psalm 40:12; 69:5).

(Isaiah 53:4-8) “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

(Psalms 40:12) “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”

(Psalms 69:5) “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.”

Our Savior had no sin of his own. He was born without original sin, being even from birth “*that Holy One*” (Luke 1:35). Throughout his life he “*knew no sin*” (2 Corinthians 5:21), “*did no sin*” (1 Peter 2:22), “*and in him is no sin*” (1 John 3:5). But, on Calvary’s cursed tree, the holy Lord God “*made him sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Just as in the incarnation “*the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14), in substitution he who was made flesh “*was made sin for us.*” — I do not know how God could be made flesh and never cease to be God; but he was. — I do not know how God could die and yet never die; but he did (Acts 20:28). — And I do not know how Christ who knew no sin could be made sin and yet never have sinned; but he was. — And he claimed our sins as his own, when “*he bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*” He cried...

(Psalms 69:7) “Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.”

(Psalms 69:19-20) “Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. (20) Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”

What condescension this is! What grace is here revealed! What unparalleled love! What mystery there is here! The Son of God takes to himself our shame! Yes! When the Lamb of God, was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, it behoved him thus to suffer and thus to cry! — “*O God, thou knowest my foolishness (perversity); and my sins (guiltiness) are not hid from thee.*”

- **When he was made sin for us, our Savior was forsaken by his Father** (Ps. 22:1-3).

(Psalms 22:1-3) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou* so far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring? (2) O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. (3) But thou *art* holy, O *thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

- **Being made sin and forsaken of God, our Redeemer, was despised of men and mocked by men who acted like a pack of wild animals around the hot blood of a fresh kill** (Ps. 22:6-8, 12-18).

(Psalms 22:6-8) "But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. (7) All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*, (8) He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

(Psalms 22:12-18) "Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round. (13) They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. (14) I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. (15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. (16) For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. (17) I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me. (18) They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

- **Finally, when he had cried, "*It is finished*," committing his spirit into his Father's hands, he gave up his life** (Luke 23:46), **just as the Old Testament said he would** (Ps. 31:5). — "*He was reckoned among the transgressors*" (Luke 22:37).

(Psalms 31:5) "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth."

To be condemned and then crucified on a cross was the worst imaginable fate that anyone could suffer in the days of the Roman Empire. Cicero, the famous Roman philosopher, declared that "the very word 'cross' should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things but the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man." Yet the Lord Jesus Christ surrendered himself up to be nailed to a cross.

- **The God and Savior we love, trust, worship and adore died a condemned malefactor** (Isa. 53:3, 7, 8-9).

(Isaiah 53:3) "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

(Isaiah 53:7-9) "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth."

- But, blessed be his name, that is not the end of the story! — **The Son of God died for us, died as our Substitute, suffered all the agony and hell of God's furious wrath by the hand of God our**

Father that, by the will of God, we might be justified and live by him, in him, with him, and for him (Isa. 53:9-12).

(Isaiah 53:9-12) "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (12) Therefore will I divide him a *portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

THREE CRUCIFIXIONS

Now, let's take a careful look at the three crosses and the three crucifixions before us on Calvary. May God the Holy Spirit give us heavenly light and understanding. I do not think it insignificant that when Paul spoke of glorying in the cross, that he spoke of three crucifixions that took place when our Savior died upon the cursed tree. It appears to me that his intent is to show us that there is a spiritual, allegorical message in the three crosses of Calvary and the three crucifixions that took place upon that bleak and dismal, blessed and glorious mound of dirt just outside the city of Jerusalem more than two thousand years ago.

THE LAW'S CRUCIFIXION

First, look at crucified Savior, and know that **God's holy law was crucified with him**. Yes, you heard me right. When I see the Lamb of God for sinners slain, I see the law of God crucified with him.

The demands of the law its legal held us in bondage and pronounced a curse, a curse of infinite wrath and justice, upon us (Deut.27:26; Gal.3:10).

(Galatians 3:10) "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

The Lord Jesus Christ met all the demands of the law for righteousness in his righteous life of obedience as our Representative, and paid all the penalty demanded by God's justice in his death at Calvary as our Substitute. Becoming a curse for us, he satisfied the justice of God for us. When Christ died, we died in him and with him, we died to the law (Gal. 3:13; Rom. 7:1-6); and the law died to us (Col. 2:14; Rom. 10:4).

(Galatians 3:13) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:"

(Colossians 2:14) "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

(Romans 7:1-6) "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? (2) For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. (3) So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (5) 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. (6) But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.”

(Romans 10:4) “For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

It is as Augustus Toplady put it:

“The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour’s obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.”

The law’s demands were all met and exhausted at the cross.

The law demands we pay our debt.
(Justice cannot forgive one cent.)
But grace points to the Lamb of God,
And says our debt He paid with blood.

The law provokes and stirs up sin,
And makes more hard the hearts of men;
But grace, (Almighty grace!), imparts
Life and melts rebel sinners’ hearts.

“Go, do the work,” the law demands;
Yet gives me neither feet nor hands.
But grace the gospel’s good news brings,
Says, “Fly to Christ,” and gives me wings!

With wings of love and wings of faith,
Sinners awakened from their death,
Fly to the throne of grace and see
God in His Son is all mercy!

My soul, on wings of faith, now fly,
And soar aloft to God on High.
Faint not, nor falter in the race;
But run, and work, and sing, “FREE GRACE!”

John Gill wrote, “There is a twofold debt paid by Christ, as the Surety of His people. The one is a debt of obedience to the law of God. This He engaged to do, when He said, ‘Lo, I come to do Thy will; Thy law is within my heart.’ Accordingly He was made under the law, and yielded perfect obedience to it, by which His people are made righteous. The other is a debt of punishment, incurred through failure of obedience in them. The curse of the law He has endured, the penalty of it, death, and by paying both these debts, the whole righteousness of the law is fulfilled in His people, considered in Him their Head and Surety.”

OUR CRUCIFIXION

Second, in the crucifixion of the penitent thief, we have a picture of the crucifixion of God’s elect with Christ. Viewing that penitent thief as he is held before us in Holy Scripture, as being a representation of all God’s elect, I say with Paul, “*I am crucified unto the world*” (Gal. 6:14). As that thief was crucified with Christ, we were crucified with Christ. When our blessed Savior died unto sin, we died unto sin. When he was crucified, we were crucified (Rom. 6:2; Gal. 2:19-20).

(Romans 6:2) “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

(Romans 6:6-11) "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin. (8) Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: (9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (10) For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(Galatians 2:19-20) "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. (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."

Being justified by Christ alone, (by the faithful obedience of Christ unto death as our Substitute), we have no obligation to the law. We are dead to the law. This is not a license to sin (Gal. 2:17; Rom. 6:1-2, 15; 7:7). It is the blessed liberty of grace. We dare not, must not, cannot return to the law. To do so is to return to its curse and condemnation. Paul said, in Galatians 2:18, doing so is to make ourselves transgressors.

(Galatians 2:18) "For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."

The law of God is "a *ministration of death*." It can never give life. It only deals out death. It can never produce holiness. It only stirs up sin. The law brings the knowledge of sin, and condemns it (Rom. 7:7-9). The law was our schoolmaster unto Christ. Once we have come to Christ in faith, the law has no power or authority over us (Gal. 3:24).

Illustration: I have a very good friend in North Carolina, Robert Spencer. He and I became good friends just a few years ago, after I ran into him and his wife (Lib) in an elevator. He was then President of the International Lions Club, on his way to one of their meetings. I was on my way to fulfill a preaching engagement in the same town. I had known Bob many years earlier as "Mr. Spencer." He was my sixth grade school teacher. I was a young rebel, constantly in trouble. Mr. Spencer, on many occasions, with the complete authority of the State (and of my parents), inflicted pain on my posterior because it was his job to do so, to bring me to maturity. In those days I dreaded his presence and feared his wrath. Now, he is my friend. I look forward to seeing him and always enjoy his presence. Even if he thought about whipping me today, he would not dare. He no longer has any authority or the power to do so. So it is with the law. Once the sinner has come to Christ, the law has no more dominion over him (Rom. 6:14-15; 7:4; 10:4).

Paul wrote, "*I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God*" (Gal. 2:19; Rom. 6:7; 7:4; 2 Cor. 5:15). We are not dead to the law that we might live unto ourselves, but that we might live unto our God, for his glory. And if we would live unto God, we cannot live unto the law. We must never return to it in any way, to any degree, for any reason; not even to appease and win the favor of weaker brethren, as Peter did at Antioch (Rom. 7:1-4). We trust Christ alone for salvation (Rom. 10:1-4). He alone is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). To return to the works of the law is to deny him altogether (Gal. 5:1-4).

Thy works, not mine, O Christ,
Speak gladness to this heart;
They tell me all is done;
They bid my fear depart.

What Jesus is, and that alone,
Is faith's delightful plea;
It never deals with sinful self
Nor righteous self, in me.

"*I am crucified with Christ.*" — What Paul here declares of himself is true of all God's elect. All of God's elect are in such union with Christ that his righteousness, his life, his death, and his resurrection are ours.

Everything our Savior was and is, everything he did and experienced as a man as our Mediator is ours and we have done in him.

"I am crucified with Christ." — Obviously, Paul is describing something altogether spiritual. We were not physically crucified with Christ. Christ was crucified for us, in our room and stead. And we were crucified with him and in him as our Mediator, Surety, Substitute and Representative. Paul is not describing a present experience, but a finished work. This phrase would be better translated — *"I have been crucified with Christ."* He is not talking about self-crucifixion. He is not talking about self-mortification. He is not talking about something he had experienced, but about something done for him by Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ was and is forever the Representative of all his people. All that he did and suffered was in our name and on our account. When he obeyed the law of God for us, we obeyed the law in him. When he suffered the unmitigated wrath of God for us and died under the penalty of his holy law, we suffered and died in him. When he was buried, we were buried. When he arose, we arose. When he took his seat in heaven, we were seated with him (Eph. 2:5-6).

When our Mediator was crucified, all our sins, the whole body of them, were laid upon him and made his. He bore them in his own body on the cursed tree, and bore them away. He destroyed and made an end of them. He put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26). He has blotted them out, removed them from us as far as the east is from the west, and cast them into the infinitely deep sea of divine forgetfulness, so that they shall never be remembered by our God against us again forever!

This was done when Christ died and we died in him. In regeneration (sanctification) we are delivered from the dominion of sin by the grace and power of God the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of God sprinkles our hearts and consciences with the blood of Christ, giving us faith in him, he delivers us from the dominion of guilt, the guilt of sin that held us in bondage. But we were crucified with Christ when Christ was crucified for us.

I LIVE

"Nevertheless I live." — This is our present experience of grace. Being born again by the grace of God, having the gift of faith wrought in us by the invincible, irresistible power of his grace, we who were dead in trespasses and in sins live. Every believer is a paradox. He is dead to the law, and yet lives to God. He has been crucified with Christ, and yet lives by Christ. Indeed, the crucified Christ lives in us.

"Yet not I." — What does Paul mean by that? He is telling us that he is now a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He was no longer Saul the blasphemer, the persecutor, and injurious man. He was no longer Saul the Pharisee. He is not telling us that his old nature was gone, or even improved (Rom. 7:14-24). Rather, he is telling us that a new man has been created in him by the grace of God; and that new man living in him is Christ. He is talking about that new man in us by the new creation of grace, *"which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"* (Eph. 4:24; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:9).

This new life was not something we obtain by our own efforts, or by our own righteousness. It is the gift and work of God in us (1 John 3:1-9). A new, righteous nature has been created in us by grace. And that new nature implanted in us, that righteousness imparted to us is Christ himself (Col. 1:27). That is exactly what he says in the next line.

NOT ME BUT CHRIST

"But Christ liveth in me."—Christ is the Author, Giver, and Sustainer of spiritual life; but he is more than that. Christ is our life! He is formed in us. He dwells in us. He is united to us, and we to him. We are *"members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."* We are one with him (Eph. 5:30-32). We who are born of God are so united to him, so thoroughly one with him that his life is our life and our spiritual life is his. Salvation, eternal life is Christ living in us!

“And the life which I now live in the flesh.” — Here Paul is speaking of our temporary earthly existence, our physical existence in this world. And he says, *“The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.”* — This is not the faith or faithfulness our Savior exercised as a man while he lived in the earth, but the faith he gives to his elect by the effectual call of his Spirit. It is the faith of which he is both the Author and the Object. This is the faith by which we live in this world.

Paul did not say that he lived upon faith in Christ, but *“by”* it. We do not live before God upon our faith, but upon Christ the Object of our faith, ever looking to him alone for pardon, righteousness, peace, joy, comfort, every supply of grace, and eternal salvation.

He who is our Savior, the Object of our faith is *“the Son of God.”* He is himself God, one with and equal with his Father, the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.

DISTINGUISHING LOVE

“Who loved me.” — How I love that! The Lord God, my Savior, loved me before the foundation of the world with an everlasting, immutable, indestructible love. Let every believing heart be assured of this great, glorious fact. God our Savior loved us from everlasting and loves us freely (Jer. 31:3; Hos. 14:4). His love for us is not in any way dependent upon or determined by us. He loves us eternally. And he loves us personally and particularly with a distinguishing love.

Let others talk as they may about “God’s universal love.” Such language is both contrary to Holy Scripture and would utterly destroy all inspiration and motivation in us to honor him and live for him. If God’s love for Jacob and his hatred of Esau are made to be the same thing, Jacob has no reason at all to praise, worship, and serve him. But that is not the case. God’s love for his own elect is a particular, special love, a love by which he distinguishes his own elect from all others, a love that inspires the hearts of all who know it to live for him.

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

“And gave himself for me.” — Imagine that! Christ Jesus the Lord, the Son of God gave himself for me! He gave himself into the hands of justice, gave himself unto death, gave himself in my room and stead, as an offering and sacrifice to God for sin to redeem me because he loved me! He gave himself for me freely and voluntarily because of his great love for me

Our Savior gave his life a ransom for many. He died to redeem and save all his people. He died for his whole church, all the members of his mystical body. That is a blessed fact of divine Revelation. Yet, Paul speaks of this matter as singularly respecting himself, almost as if he was the only person Christ loved and redeemed. It was Christ’s love for him, Christ’s death for him that overwhelmed him. **Faith does not deal with indefinite ambiguities, but with blessed, personal realities** (Eph. 1:13-14). As **John Gill** put it, “Faith deals with Christ not in a general way, as the Savior of the world, but with a special regard to a man’s self: this is the life of faith; and these considerations of the person, love, and grace of Christ, animate and encourage faith in its exercises on him.”

ONE WITH CHRIST

“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.” — Here is man, but here is the Son of God as well, and the two personalities are singularly interwoven. Christ and his people are one! As we were naturally one with Adam, as he is our representative in the Covenant of Works, so we are spiritually one with Christ as he is our Representative in the Covenant of Grace (Rom. 5:18-19).

When Paul says, *“I am crucified with Christ,”* he means by that that we are one with Christ. How can this be? **Thomas Goodwin** put it this way...

“As in the womb, the head and members are not conceived apart, but together, as having relation to each other; so were we and Christ (as making up one mystical body to God) formed together in the eternal womb of election.”

“Lord Jesus, are we one with Thee?
O height, O depth of love!
Thou one with us on Calvary,
We are with Thee above.

Such was Thy grace, that for our sake
Thou didst from heaven come down,
With us of flesh and blood partake,
In all our misery, one.

Our sins, our guilt, in love divine,
Confessed and borne by Thee;
The gall, the curse, the wrath, were Thine,
To set Thy members free.

Ascended now in glory bright,
Still one with us Thou art;
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height
Thy saints and Thee can part.

O teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That Thou with us art truly one,
And we are one with Thee.

Soon, soon, shall come that glorious day,
When seated on Thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering world's display
That Thou art with us one.”

We have such a union with Christ that when he died, we actually died in him, thus God's wrath was satisfied (Isa. 53:4-6, 8, 12; Matt. 20:28; Gal. 1:4; 3:13). Our union to Christ is such that when he was quickened from the dead, we were made alive in him (Eph. 2:3, 5, 6; Col. 2:12-14; 3:1; Rom. 8:1, 33-39). Because we are one with him, living in him, we shall never die (John 10:28; 11:25-26).

THE WORLD'S CRUCIFIXION

But there was a third cross on Calvary's hill, and a third crucifixion. The third crucifixion was the crucifixion of that other thief, the one who is in hell, suffering all the horror of God's wrath. Paul speaks of that man's death as the death of the world.

As Paul speaks in Galatians 6:14, saying “*the world is crucified unto me,*” he tells us that the world too is crucified to the believer by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the world that is represented by the crucifixion of that eternally lost and damned soul. This world is the City of Destruction. All its attractions are Vanity Fair. The world promises so much and delivers so little. Love not the world. It is a dead thing.

Someone once wrote, “If the praise of man elates me and his blame depresses me; if I cannot rest under misunderstanding without defending myself; if I love to be loved more than to love, to be served more than to serve, then I know nothing of Calvary love.” A dead thing has no appeal. The sooner it is buried, the better!

The world crucified our Savior. The world laughed, and mocked, and danced, around him as he hung upon the tree. The world spit in his face, plucked out his beard, and pierced his side. Yet, multitudes who profess that they are crucified with Christ crave, and seem to live for the approval and applause of the world, and seek the world's approval and applause for their children. Let us not be so foolish!

(1 John 2:15-17) "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

What will it profit, if you should gain, and lose your own soul? The world declared that our Savior was an impostor and blasphemer, but God reversed the world's verdict, and declared him to be Lord and Christ.

Yet there is more here than a condemnation of the world at large. The poor wretch on the third cross represents every sinner who despises and rejects the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, hear me now, hear me, you who yet believe not the Son of God. — The wrath of God abides on you!

(John 3:36) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(Romans 6:23) "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Do you ask, "Pastor, why did the one thief go to Paradise that day with the Son of God, and the other to hell?" Let me give you one, clear answer. — The one believed and the other refused to believe on the crucified Christ. — By the crucified Christ the one was save and the other was judged. So shall it be for us all. — Either you will be saved by the cross, or you will be judged and forever damned by the cross. Which will it be? — Will you, or will you not believe on the Son of God?

(John 3:36) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(Galatians 6:14) "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Amen.