

INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons some Christians keep changing churches is that they can't seem to get along with anyone. Maybe they don't like the preacher or the minister of music, or the deacons.

A ship captain sailing through the South Pacific saw smoke rising from a little island. When he arrived he found a man who had been stranded there alone for ten years. As they were preparing to rescue him, the captain noticed there were three grass huts built near the beach. He said, "What are those three grass huts?" The man said, "Oh, I live in one of them, and, since I'm a Baptist, the other one is where I go to church." The captain said, "What about the third hut?" The Baptist said, "Oh, that's where I USED to go to church."

Some people can't even get along with themselves! Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia, the area of Southern Turkey, to warn them about divisive people who had infiltrated their ranks. Paul had founded the churches preaching the simple Gospel of Grace, "For by grace we are saved by faith, not of works, lest any person could boast." But false teachers had invaded the church and were adding works to grace. They demanded these Gentile believers become full-blooded Jews before they could be saved.

Paul wrote this strong-worded letter to reinforce the gospel of grace: Jesus plus nothing equals salvation. He warned them NOT to stray from the grace-way.

Galatians 6:11-15. "See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Not even those who are circumcised obey the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God."

We believe Paul dictated his letters to an assistant, but as he came to the conclusion of this letter, he wrote the words himself. Some of his enemies questioned his authority or whether this letter actually came from Paul, so this is his way of signing his name. Why did he use such large letters? We know from chapter 4 that Paul had some kind of eye problem, either an eye disease or an eye injury from his numerous stonings and beatings. So, his eyesight might have been so poor that he had to use large letters. Or it might have been as simple as Paul wanting to really emphasize his final comments. We still do the same thing: When we want to say something really important we use a larger font.

When I introduced the title of this message you might have visualized the three crosses at Calvary, the central cross of Jesus, and the two crosses on either side where the two thieves died. But this verse is about only one cross, the cross of Jesus, but there are three different crucifixions.

Let's examine Galatians 6:14 again: "May I never boast except in (1) the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ, (that's the first crucifixion) through which (2) the world has been crucified, (there's the second crucifixion) and (3) I (have been crucified) to the world." (There's the third.)

Let me tell you the true story of a young songwriter named Isaac. Back in '92 he was an 18-year old pastor's kid who grew up attending church every Sunday. He loved the Lord, but he thought the music at church was awful. It was slow and sad, and hardly any young people sang. Isaac was fed up with it, so he finally complained to his dad. He said, "Dad, the music at church stinks. When are we going to sing some new songs?" His dad said, "Son, if you think you can do better, why don't you write some new songs for church?" So that's exactly what Isaac did that week. He wrote two new songs for the next Sunday. When they sang them, there was a mixed reaction. Many of the older people hated it. But most of the young people were inspired and so Isaac kept on writing new songs.

But I'm not talking about 1992; I'm talking about the year 1692. That's when Isaac Watts started writing hymns. Eventually he wrote over 600 songs of praise including "Joy to the World." Before Isaac Watts, the only music in church was the singing or chanting the Psalms. Young Isaac introduced a revolutionary, but controversial, style of writing words that didn't come right out of the Bible. For most his life, his music was considered too radical to be sung in churches.

He based every one of his songs on a passage of scripture. One of his most loved songs came from our text, Galatians 6:14. We don't know it by his original title, which was: "Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ." See if you recognize this song considered too radical in its time: "When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood."

Isaac Watts wrote a third verse we've never sung. I'm not sure why it was removed, because it identifies the three crucifixions in this verse. "His dying crimson, like a robe, Spreads o'er his body on the tree; Then am I dead to all the globe, And all the globe is dead to me."

Let's look at each of these three crucifixions and discover what they mean to us.

1. THE HISTORICAL CRUCIFIXION: The Cross removes the penalty of sin

Paul wrote that he would boast only in the cross. That was an amazing statement, because the cross was a horrible instrument of torture and execution. It was a thing of shame. The Latin word for cross is *crux*, and it was such a horrendous word the Romans never spoke of it in polite company. It would be as inappropriate for me to describe in detail how a Texas criminal on death row dies by lethal injection. But today, the word *crux* means something important. We speak of getting to the crux of the matter. Our word "excruciating" comes from the cross. When someone speaks about excruciating pain, that word literally means "from the cross." But Paul wasn't boasting about just any Roman cross, he was boasting in only one cross—the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Transforming Truth: The death of Jesus is my only reason to boast

Remember, Paul was writing to combat the influence of legalistic Jewish teachers who had misled the believers into thinking they had to become good Jews before they could become Christians. They demanded all the Gentile men undergo circumcision. They were PROUD of their Jewish observances, they boasted about how religious they were.

There are a lot of things people boast about today. We brag about our investments, our houses, our cars, and our football teams. People still boast about how religious they are. But there is only ONE thing we should truly boast about, and that is the cross of Jesus.

The Bible states the penalty of sin in no uncertain terms. It says, "The soul who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18:20) So since we are all sinners, we deserve death and hell. But on the cross, Jesus, the sinless one, became sin for us, and He paid the price for the penalty for our sins. He became our substitute. The Bible says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

The scene was the Nazi Death Camp in Auschwitz, Poland. The year was 1941. Several prisoners had successfully escaped, so in order to make an example, the Nazis randomly chose ten prisoners to be herded into a cell where they would be starved to death. The name of a Polish Jew named Frandiszek Gasovnachek was called. He cried out in anguish, "Wait! I have a wife and children. What will happen to them?" The guards ignored him.

Then another prisoner, Maximilian Kolbe, stepped forward and said, "I'll take his place." Kolbe was a Catholic priest arrested for hiding Jews from the Nazis. The soldiers grabbed Kolbe instead. He was marched into the starvation cell and never made it out alive.

A few years ago, NBC interviewed the 82-year-old Frandiszek. He cried as he told the story of Maximilian Kolbe. The camera followed him outside his tiny house to a carefully tended garden with marble monument. It said, "IN MEMORY OF MAXIMILIAN KOLBE. HE DIED IN MY PLACE."

That's exactly what Jesus did for each one of us. We are guilty and deserve the penalty of death and hell, but Jesus stepped up and said, "Father, I take their place. Take me instead."

One week ago, I stood among Chinese Christians singing words I didn't recognize, but I knew the tune. It was Chris Tomlin's "Here I am to worship." And as they sang the recurring lines in Mandarin I sang them in English, "I'll never know how much it cost; to see my sin upon the cross." That's a great line, because it's impossible for us to comprehend the depth of love and grace that causes Jesus to bear our sins in His body on the cross. That's the power of the first crucifixion.

2. THE CULTURAL CRUCIFIXION: The Cross repels the power of sin

When Paul wrote that the world had been crucified to him, he wasn't talking about the world of

people, or the planet earth. In the New Testament “the world” describes the general attitude, actions, and culture of people who reject God. We battle sin on three fronts: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The devil is the tempter, the world is the temptation, and my sinful nature, the flesh, is the tempted. To put it another way, the world is the carrot the devil dangles before my sinful nature. The devil uses the sins of the world to attract my sinful nature.

Transforming Truth: The attractions of this sinful world have lost their allure

The actual word for “world” is the word *cosmos*. There’s actually a ladies magazine named *Cosmopolitan*. I looked at the latest issue of Cosmo and I was going to display the cover on the screens just to point out some of the articles, but I was too embarrassed. And since we have young kids in our services I thought it would be inappropriate.

Ladies, it’s great for you to want to look good, and it’s fine to dress fashionably. But if you’re a follower of Jesus, you can’t buy into the mindset or the lifestyle promoted by *Cosmopolitan* magazine. I’m not saying you’re going to hell if you read magazines like *Cosmo*, *Allure*, *Glamour*, or *Vogue*, I just want you to recognize that when the world has been crucified to you, then that kind of philosophy no longer pulls you in; it’s dead to you. And I’m not just picking on women’s magazines. Men’s magazines are so bad I don’t even want to mention their names!

The Bible says, “Don’t love the world’s ways. Don’t love the world’s goods. Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity.” (1 John 2:15-17 *The Message*) Today the world is still trying to draw us into its fashions, fads, and philosophy that you don’t need God.

The Bible says in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The world wants to make all of us conform to its fads and fashions. Fashion labels are a perfect example. We all feel the pressure to wear the labels that are currently in vogue. I can remember when Jenni was in middle school; everybody was wearing ugly boots called Doc Martens. They looked exactly like what farmers in Alabama wore with the overalls when I was growing up. They were called Brogans and you could buy a pair for \$10. But Doc Martens weren’t cheap. I can remember Jenni telling us she just HAD to have a pair of Doc Martens because all her friends were wearing them.

I took her to a shoe store and spent a ridiculous amount of money for the ugliest shoes imaginable. But just to show my teenage daughter how cool I was, I bought a pair, too! But neither one of us wore them for very long. Fads and fashions of the world come and go, but the Bible says whoever does the will of God abides forever.

In Greek mythology there were dangerous sea creatures called Sirens that were half-women and half-bird. The Sirens played or sang such enticing music, sailors would steer toward them and die as their ship crashed upon the jagged rocks. These sirens appear in two myths, Homer’s *Odyssey* and the story of Jason and the Argonauts. If you’re not really into Greek mythology, maybe you saw the latest Ice Age movie, “Ice Age: Continental Drift.” Manny the Woolly

Mammoth (whose voice is Ray Romano) had to steer their iceberg past some creatures disguised as beautiful females, an idea borrowed from Greek mythology.

But back to Greek Mythology: When Odysseus sailed by the sirens, he filled all his sailors' ears with beeswax so they couldn't hear the music. He had his crew tie him to the mast as they sailed past the sirens. He was so tormented by the music of the sirens that he tried his best to break free and swim to shore. He was almost driven mad by their enticing songs.

But in the story of Jason and the Argonauts, Jason used a different strategy to avoid the call of the sirens. They had a talented musician onboard named Orpheus. While they sailed past the sirens, Orpheus played music on his lyre that was louder and more beautiful, so the sailors paid no attention to the music of the sirens.

The world is still playing it's siren music trying to attract us toward what it claims is the pleasures of sin. But it is a dangerous song because sin always leads to death. And most of us can think of Christians who have ended up with their faith shipwreck on the jagged rocks of sin.

But our response to the siren call of the world should not be like Odysseus who tied himself to the mast. He was tormented. Instead Jason and his sailors were listening to another song, a song so beautiful they didn't even hear the song of the wicked sirens. As followers of Jesus, we're listening to a new song, and it's so beautiful and captivating that the song of the world no longer appeals to us.

Imagine you're out having dinner at a nice restaurant with your family or friends. You're looking at the extensive menu and you turn the dessert page. There's a gorgeous picture of a dessert called Death by Chocolate. It's a moist cake with chocolate layers and whipped cream on top with a cherry. Your mouth starts watering and you think, "I'm tempted to order my dessert first! But for sure, I'm going to have that for dessert." Then you start ordering your appetizers and your main course. The food is great and the fellowship is sweet, and before you know it, the meal is over and the server brings you the dessert menu. You turn and look at that picture of the death by chocolate and for some strange reason; it no longer makes your mouth water. In fact, it makes you a little sick to think about trying to eat it. You lost your desire for dessert for a simple reason: You're already full. You're totally satisfied and you can't eat another bite.

The temptations of the world are like the dessert menu. It advertises a lot of things that make your mouth water—you really want to try it. But when you fully satisfied in Christ and the world has been crucified to you, you may look at the dessert menu, but you can smile and say, "No thanks!"

William McDonald wrote, "When a man is saved, the world says goodbye to him, and he says goodbye to the world. He is spoiled as far as the world is concerned because he is no longer interested in its fleeting pleasures; the world has lost its attraction for him, because he has found One who completely satisfies." (*Believers' Bible Commentary*)

3. THE PERSONAL CRUCIFIXION: The Cross rejects the practice of sin

Not only was the world dead to Paul, he had died to the world as well. There was nothing in the world that appealed to him, because he was crucified with Christ. As Christians, we aren't perfectly sinless, but the cross makes us hate sins the way God hates sin.

Transforming Truth: My sinful nature no longer controls me!

There was a famous Nazarene evangelist named Bud Robinson. Everybody called him Uncle Bud. He lived and preached here in Texas for many years. He was an unusual preacher, because he had a terrible speech impediment. He stuttered and had a pronounced lisp. In spite of this, God used him to win thousands of people to Christ.

He was once invited to New York City. His host spent all day showing him the bright lights and wonders of the Big Apple. That night Bud Robinson prayed this prayer. He said, "Lord, I thank thee that Thou allowed me to thee all these wonders of New York. And I thank thee that I didn't thee a thingle thing I wanted."

Paul knew what it meant to be crucified with Christ. He wrote, "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." (Galatians 2:20)

What does it *really* mean to be crucified with Christ? For years, that was just a verse I quoted, but it was so nebulous and spiritual, I couldn't sink my teeth into it. It was like trying to chew Cool Whip. But then I came to understand it in a practical way.

It's really so simple, I almost missed it. There really was someone who was *literally* crucified with Christ, and we'll get to meet him in heaven. It was the thief on the cross. As he hung there, he knew his life was about to end. He looked over at Jesus who was bleeding and dying as well. The last thing Jesus looked like was a king, but he said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And that simple profession of faith was enough. Jesus said, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

When we're crucified with Christ, we'll be like that thief. He longer cared about what people thought about him. They could have yelled that he was ugly and stupid, but it didn't bother him, because he was crucified with Christ. He didn't fear arousing the wrath of the Romans for talking to Jesus, because he was crucified with Christ.

Just imagine while he was being crucified with Christ, a well-known prostitute walked by. Do you think he was interested in looking at her? No, he was crucified with Christ. Just imagine a Roman Centurion drove up in the latest model of a sporty chariot. It had eight horsepower and dual slaves. Do you think he thought, "Man, I'd sure like to have one of those?" Nope. He was crucified with Christ. Imagine a wealthy Sadducee was there wearing a mink robe and a velvet prayer shawl. Do you think that thief yelled, "Hey, Simon, where can I get me an outfit like that?" Nope again. He was crucified with Christ, so none of those things mattered to Him. The only thing that mattered was Jesus. Put yourself on that cross with Jesus and look into His eyes, and you lose the desire to look at anything else.

It's like that great song says, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face; And the things of earth (the world); Grow strangely dim in His glory and grace."

CONCLUSION

Some people don't want to be reminded, but we should never forget that last Tuesday was the 11th anniversary of the day Radical Muslims attacked America. On that Tuesday morning, eleven years ago, all of our lives were changed in those horrifying few hours.

You've probably seen the untouched photo of the smoke billowing from the World Trade Center where it appears as if you can see the face of Satan in the smoke. It could have been just a bizarre natural phenomenon, or it could have been God's reminder to us that Jesus said these words concerning Satan, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." (John 10:10) As we've seen evidence again in Egypt and Libya this week, Radical Islam is a violent, deadly religion. And any expression of a religion that kills in the name of its founder cannot be of God—it is motivated by Satan who kills, steals and destroys.

On 9/11 the smoky face of the devil dissolved after a few seconds. But when the workers at Ground Zero started clearing away the site, they came upon an amazing sight—a perfectly formed cross standing among the wreckage of the fallen towers. Now, maybe that was also a freak accident of the physics of falling steel beams. But maybe it is more.

Both the face and the cross might be complete accidents, or they could be a message from God. The devil appears for a second and then disappears in a swirl of smoke leaving behind only the carnage of death and destruction. But the cross still stands strong outside the 9/11 memorial as a symbol of hope for the thousands who visit it every day. The cross is God's reminder that evil cannot win. The Romans put Jesus on the most despised symbol of the ancient world, unspeakable brutality and death. But God has transformed the cross into a powerful symbol of love and forgiveness.

How do we respond to the cross? The last stanza of Isaac Watt's song tells us, "Were the whole realm of nature mine; that were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so Divine; Demands my life, my soul, my all!"

OUTLINE

“May I never boast except in (1) the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which (2) the world has been crucified, and (3) I to the world.” *Galatians 6:14*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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