

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

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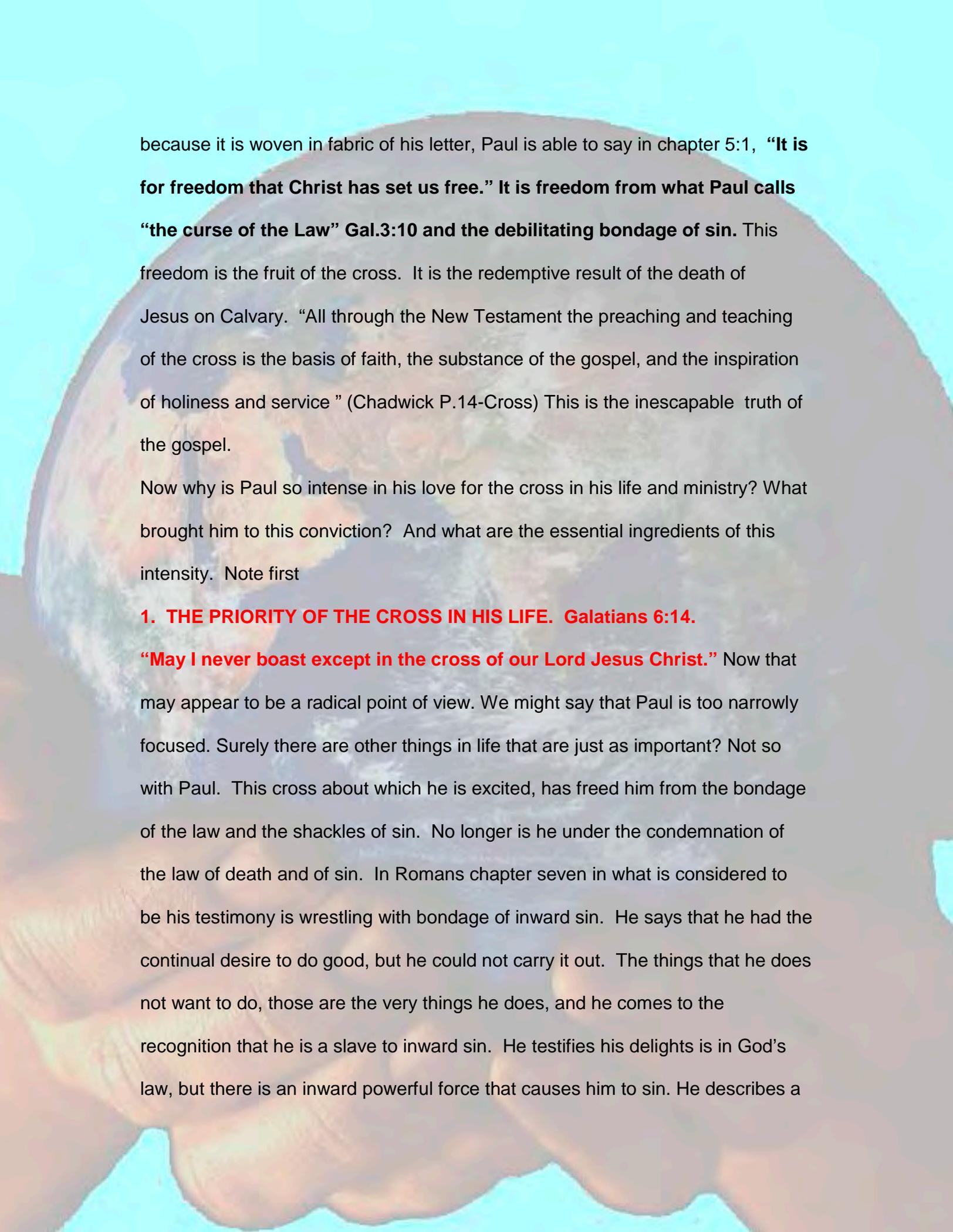
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MY GLORY.....THE CROSS

Scripture Reading- Galatians 6:11-14.
Introduction

Text – Galatians 6:14.

In this passage of scripture the Apostle Paul makes an extraordinary statement in verse in Galatians 6:14. He describes how he feels about the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is clear that he is not speaking in riddles, or meandering in the realms of the mysterious. While it is true that there is a certain amount of mystery surrounding the cross, there is no mystery as to how he feels about it, and as to the place it holds in his life. It also clear that he is not concerned as to how people feel about his conviction. He is transparently honest about it. **“May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The King James Version has it, **“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** This is not simply creedal or doctrinal statement made by one of the outstanding leaders of the early church. The cross is primarily his burning passion and deep conviction. **“May I never boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** The Galatians captures the message of Cross. And



because it is woven in fabric of his letter, Paul is able to say in chapter 5:1, **“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”** It is freedom from what Paul calls **“the curse of the Law” Gal.3:10 and the debilitating bondage of sin.** This freedom is the fruit of the cross. It is the redemptive result of the death of Jesus on Calvary. “All through the New Testament the preaching and teaching of the cross is the basis of faith, the substance of the gospel, and the inspiration of holiness and service ” (Chadwick P.14-Cross) This is the inescapable truth of the gospel.

Now why is Paul so intense in his love for the cross in his life and ministry? What brought him to this conviction? And what are the essential ingredients of this intensity. Note first

1. THE PRIORITY OF THE CROSS IN HIS LIFE. Galatians 6:14.

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now that may appear to be a radical point of view. We might say that Paul is too narrowly focused. Surely there are other things in life that are just as important? Not so with Paul. This cross about which he is excited, has freed him from the bondage of the law and the shackles of sin. No longer is he under the condemnation of the law of death and of sin. In Romans chapter seven in what is considered to be his testimony is wrestling with bondage of inward sin. He says that he had the continual desire to do good, but he could not carry it out. The things that he does not want to do, those are the very things he does, and he comes to the recognition that he is a slave to inward sin. He testifies his delights is in God’s law, but there is an inward powerful force that causes him to sin. He describes a

fierce war going on within him. His desire to be freed from the power of sin within is so intense that cries out in Romans 7:23-24. "What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?" In the next breathe he answers his own question "Thanks be to God-through our Lord Jesus Christ." The next chapter is his vibrant testimony that describes a power far greater than the power of sin. In his own words he writes in Romans 8:2 "the Spirit of Life set him free from the law of sin and death." And then in Galatians again he talks about this freedom. And it is possible because of the authority of the cross, the efficacy of the shed Blood of Jesus, and the power of Christ's death and resurrection in his life. This is his personal experience of the Cross so we can understand why the cross is a priority in his life. Why should he not glory in the cross of Christ? But Paul was concerned that the Christians have same fire burning in their bones. He wanted them to be clear on the centrality and the importance of the cross to and in the Christian message. The reason that Paul is so exercised about all of this, is that were certain Christian teachers who were trying to enforce the Jewish rite of circumcision on the Christians. They felt that the cross was not enough to bring about salvation. It could be considered to be part of the process of salvation, but circumcision was vital in this process. There were two things that were very wrong about this message. First

a. Circumcision is an Outward Sign. Galatians 6:12-13. Paul said in verse 12 that those who wanted to make a good impression outwardly, were trying to compel Christians to be circumcised. These people were concerned about the outward appearances of religion, and so they were

compelled the Christians to go through this ceremony. The word compel means to put the pressure on. These teachers were saying that circumcision was necessary for true Christian initiation. It was necessary on the process of becoming a Christian. Leon Morris makes clear that the false teachers were more concerned with the impression they were making and with matters that had to do with the flesh. This is not a new mindset. People are still trying to make a good impression by adherence to their religion, or placing an unscriptural importance on the rituals of the church. Outward signs are simply witnesses to something internal and real, and they have no power to save. Furthermore there was an additional reason that that these teachers were compelling the Christians to go through the rite of circumcision. It was that they should not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. V.12. This seems to indicate that preachers like Paul, who emphasized the centrality of the crucifixion, were under pressure to down play or give up preaching this gospel. To proclaim circumcision was to align the new Christian movement with Judaism, a religion that had official Roman approval, and by doing this they would avoid persecution. In other words, played down the truth in order that they might live in their comfort zones. They were allowing the difficulties and opposition they were facing to influence and mold their faith. Let us add something to the gospel they were in fact saying, to soften it, so that we can avoid the pain of persecution. Let us develop a faith that will not offend the outside world. This is not new thought, for it is happening in the seeker sensitive

approach propelled by much of the contemporary church. Circumcision is an outward sign. Furthermore,

b. Circumcision is a Physical Act. Galatians 6:12-13. John Stott points out that, “that circumcision was performed on the body. It is quite true that God gave it to Abraham as a sign of His covenant. But in itself it was nothing. Yet the Judaizers were elevating to a rite of central importance insisting that without it nobody could be saved. But how could an outward and bodily operation secure the salvation of a soul or be an indispensable condition of salvation? It was nonsense. Paul supplies the answer in verse 15 supplies the answer: “For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything what counts is a new creation.”(Stott p.177 **Comm. on Galatians.**) Circumcision is a physical act performed by man on a man. No act performed by the flesh can bring about eternal salvation. Man cannot provide salvation. All of this talk of circumcision and obedience to the rituals of the law bothered him. In chapter 2 of this letter he asks a question “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. V.2. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you have heard. V.3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, you are now trying by human effort. Why revert back the works of the law when grace is available. Jesus has done for us what no amount of human power could achieve. Circumcision had not achieved it before Jesus came, and continued to be unsuccessful after Jesus came and died for men, and yet these false leaders

persisted in compelling people to go through the rite of circumcision. No wonder Paul called the Galatians foolish. We are not saved by the power of the flesh, but by the power of God. Salvation is provided by the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is ours by the Grace of God and God alone.. Circumcision is not a saving act from sin.

Now it is true that Paul talks about a spiritual circumcision in his letter to the Colossians 2: 11. What he says is important. "In Him(In Christ) you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ." Circumcision is another term for sanctification. And it is Christ who sanctifies or circumcises. It is a Divine act. When man performs it, it is a physical act. We are not redeemed by the work of the flesh or by what we do or by merit points. We are saved by the grace of God. Paul says it clearly in his letter to the Ephesians 2:8. "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God, so that no can boast." What he is saying in this passage of scripture in Galatians is important. He does not glory in an outward sign or a religious ritual. He does not glory in circumcision he glories in the cross. "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..." The cross is Paul's priority. Note secondly,

2. PAUL'S PASSION FOR THE CROSS IN HIS LIFE. Galatians 6:14.

May I never boast except in Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul is laying bare his soul before the church. It would be easy for us to miss the shocking nature of Paul's unashamed commitment to the cross. Why

would Paul glory in something that was a object of shame and humiliation.

The cross in that day was not something in which to glory and exalt. The

cross did not start out as an emblem of which to be proud. It has been

pointed out that the word “crux was unmentionable in polite Roman society....

Even when one was being condemned to death by crucifixion they would talk

about the fact that he would be hanged “on the unlucky tree.” Crucifixion was an

unmentionable word. “But Paul not only used the unmentionable word, he

gloried in it.” (Leon Morris p.188). He boasted in it. There really is no English

equivalent for the word boast. One has said that it means “to boast in, to glory in,

to trust in, to rejoice in, to revel in, and to live for.(Stott. P.339. The Cross) The

question is why would Paul glory in something that was despised or held with

contempt? There must have been something more than just what appeared to

be on the surface. First of all I think that Paul recognized,

a. The Distinctiveness of this Cross. Galatians 6:14. While the world did not realize it, this cross in which Paul gloried was different than any other cross.

Paul says that it is “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. “ This is what makes it

distinctive. This is what gives it its uniqueness. And this is what gives it its power

and authority. The man of the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ is that which made it

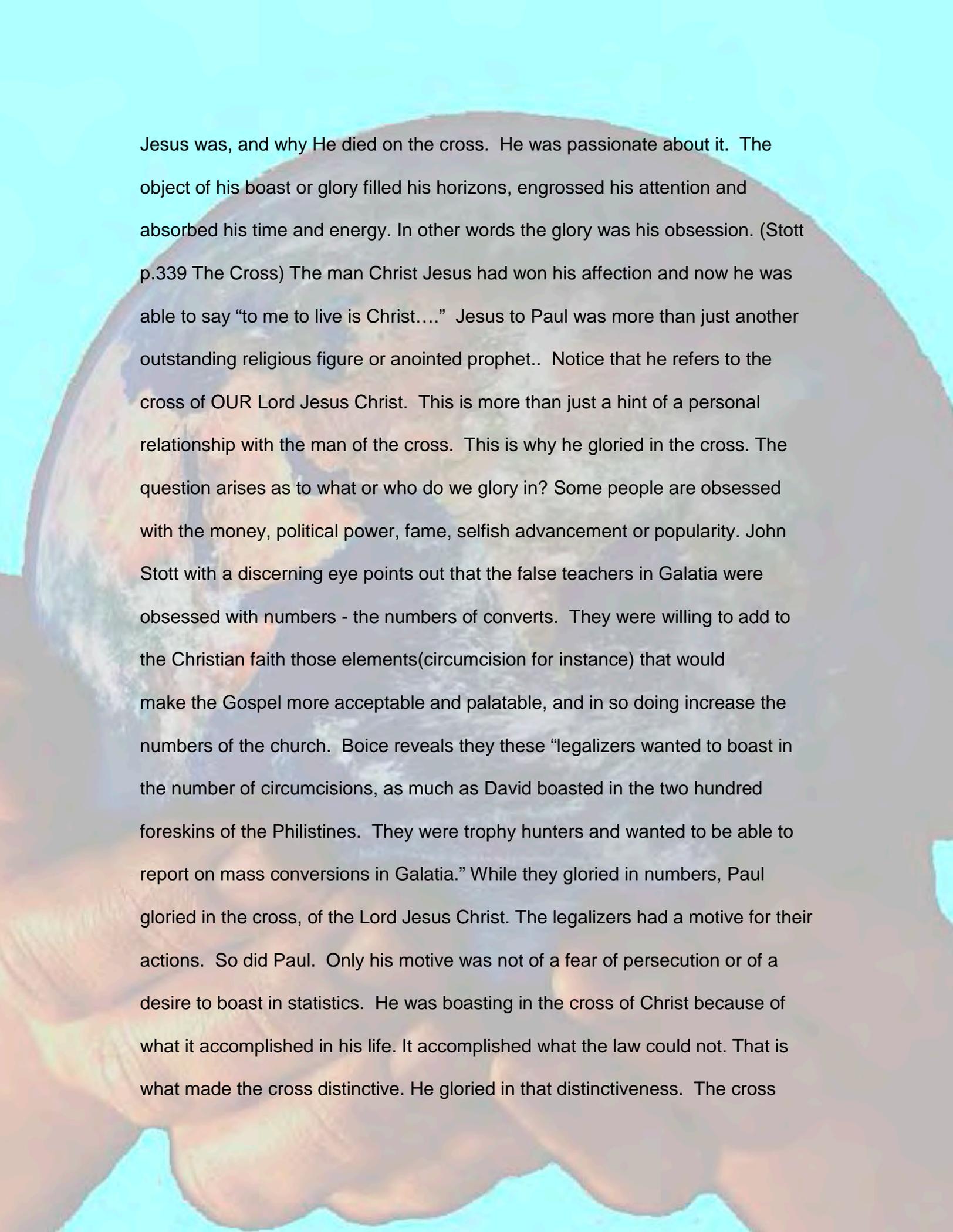
distinctive. The cross to him was not simply two pieces of timber put together on

which a man died. This mode of punishment was common in the Roman Empire.

Thieves, robbers and criminals were impaled on a Roman cross. They deserved

their punishment, but the cross upon which Jesus died was distinctive for He was

innocent. It was unique because of who died on it. Paul knew who the man



Jesus was, and why He died on the cross. He was passionate about it. The object of his boast or glory filled his horizons, engrossed his attention and absorbed his time and energy. In other words the glory was his obsession. (Stott p.339 The Cross) The man Christ Jesus had won his affection and now he was able to say “to me to live is Christ....” Jesus to Paul was more than just another outstanding religious figure or anointed prophet.. Notice that he refers to the cross of OUR Lord Jesus Christ. This is more than just a hint of a personal relationship with the man of the cross. This is why he gloried in the cross. The question arises as to what or who do we glory in? Some people are obsessed with the money, political power, fame, selfish advancement or popularity. John Stott with a discerning eye points out that the false teachers in Galatia were obsessed with numbers - the numbers of converts. They were willing to add to the Christian faith those elements(circumcision for instance) that would make the Gospel more acceptable and palatable, and in so doing increase the numbers of the church. Boice reveals they these “legalizers wanted to boast in the number of circumcisions, as much as David boasted in the two hundred foreskins of the Philistines. They were trophy hunters and wanted to be able to report on mass conversions in Galatia.” While they gloried in numbers, Paul gloried in the cross, of the Lord Jesus Christ. The legalizers had a motive for their actions. So did Paul. Only his motive was not of a fear of persecution or of a desire to boast in statistics. He was boasting in the cross of Christ because of what it accomplished in his life. It accomplished what the law could not. That is what made the cross distinctive. He gloried in that distinctiveness. The cross

was distinctive because of the man of the cross, Jesus Christ. What do you glory in this morning? Paul gloried in the cross. I believe that he also gloried in the Cross because of,

b. The Design of this Cross. Galatians 6:14. The design of the cross is made clear by the title given to the man who died on the cross - the Lord Jesus Christ. His name explains who He was and why He died. Boice points out what this name meant., that He is Savior or meaning literally "God who saves, the Messiah. Why would you glory in the fleshly act of circumcision which cannot save, and not glory in the Christ of the cross who gave Himself as the redeeming sacrifice for the world. H. D. Trumbull wrote that "Calvary shows how far men will go in sin, and how far God went for man's salvation." He went to the death of the cross that was repulsive to the world. And He went because He loved us and was willing to suffer lowest form of degradation to redeem us. Even men today are hiding the cross because it is offensive. This was God's design for our salvation, because there is no forgiveness without the shedding of Blood. There is no other salvation apart from the Cross of Christ. In Jesus, and in Jesus alone, is there salvation and it is not the work of human hands, or human energy it is the gift of the grace of God. D. L. Moody wrote, "the dying thief had nails through both hands, so that he could not work; and a nail through each foot so that he could not run errands for the Lord; he could not lift a hand or a foot toward his salvation, and yet Christ offered him the Gift of God and he took it and he entered into paradise." That is the magnificent design of God's grace no wonder Paul gloried in it. And that is why we read of Paul's passion for the

cross. Paul also gloried in the cross because,

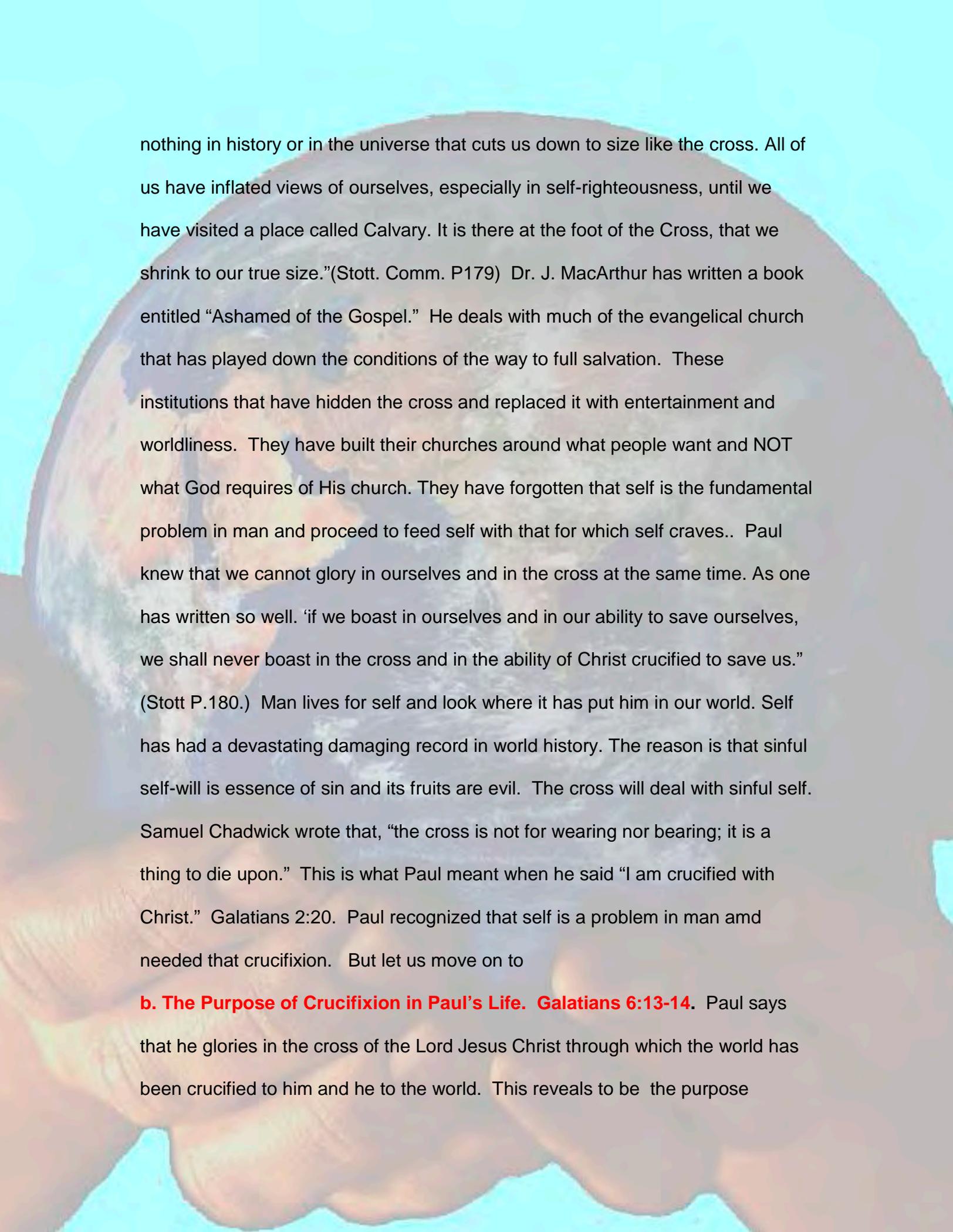
3. THE POWER OF THE CROSS IN HIS LIFE. Galatians 6: 13-14.

“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.” This is not only a great declaration of the truth of the effective power of the cross, it is also the passionate testimony of Paul’s personal experience. His words make this clear. Note that highlighted here

a. The Fundamental Problem in the Paul’s Life Galatians 6:14. He said that it is through the cross “that the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.”

The operative words are ME and I. Meddling with man’s ego, will give rise to a hostile reaction in the heart. Nevertheless, it is a message that we should hear in the church today, because it is the full counsel of God – the full truth of God, and let it never be said that the difficult part of the way to life has been camouflaged by empty rhetoric from this pulpit. The word crucifixion is painful word in any circumstance. But when it involves the crucifixion of self it becomes volatile. It is repulsive to mindset of the society in which live. A society that demands personal rights no matter what it costs others, and which is committed to self-realization and self- gratification. A pleasure loving society that is known as the “me generation,” this gospel is not acceptable to its thinking and way of life.

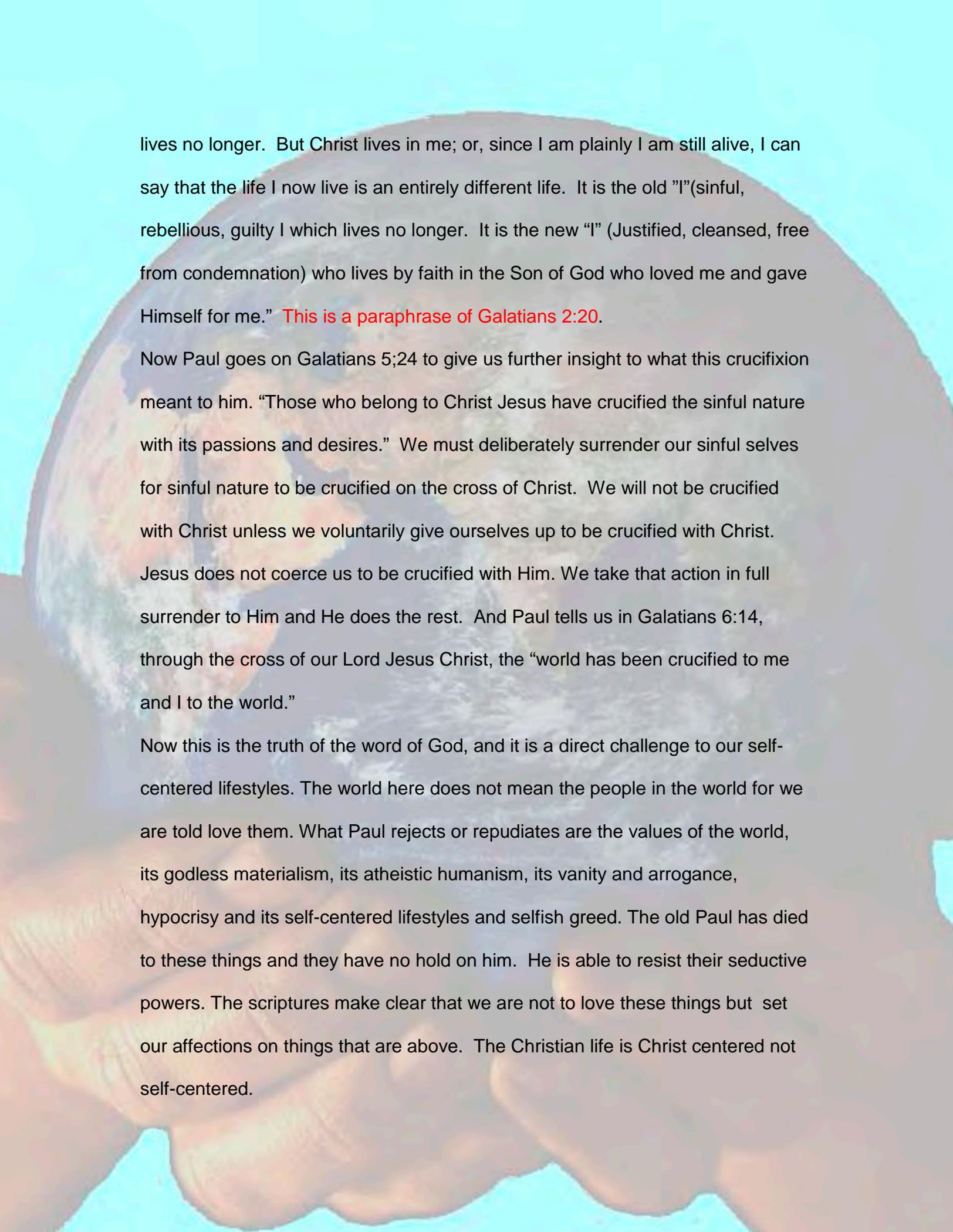
They retreat from it and even become hostile to it, and to the shame of some of the church its message has been watered down to appease the world. John Stott observes that the world will not object to Christianity so long as it is not the faith of Christ crucified. But Christ crucified they detest. (Comm. P.179) There is



nothing in history or in the universe that cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there at the foot of the Cross, that we shrink to our true size.”(Stott. Comm. P179) Dr. J. MacArthur has written a book entitled “Ashamed of the Gospel.” He deals with much of the evangelical church that has played down the conditions of the way to full salvation. These institutions that have hidden the cross and replaced it with entertainment and worldliness. They have built their churches around what people want and NOT what God requires of His church. They have forgotten that self is the fundamental problem in man and proceed to feed self with that for which self craves.. Paul knew that we cannot glory in ourselves and in the cross at the same time. As one has written so well. “if we boast in ourselves and in our ability to save ourselves, we shall never boast in the cross and in the ability of Christ crucified to save us.” (Stott P.180.) Man lives for self and look where it has put him in our world. Self has had a devastating damaging record in world history. The reason is that sinful self-will is essence of sin and its fruits are evil. The cross will deal with sinful self. Samuel Chadwick wrote that, “the cross is not for wearing nor bearing; it is a thing to die upon.” This is what Paul meant when he said “I am crucified with Christ.” Galatians 2:20. Paul recognized that self is a problem in man and needed that crucifixion. But let us move on to

b. The Purpose of Crucifixion in Paul’s Life. Galatians 6:13-14. Paul says that he glories in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to him and he to the world. This reveals to be the purpose

of the cross. This purpose can be achieved because of the power of the cross. Paul seems to link together two similar passages of scripture in Galatians 2:20 and 5 verse 24. It is clear that the truth of crucifixion is planted in Paul's mind as the answer sinful self will. The result of this, he says, is a new creation. Paul makes quite clear that **“neither circumcision nor un-circumcision means anything, what counts is a new creation.”** **With the crucifixion of self there must be a change in the life. Paul reveals the weakness of ritual and highlights the power of the cross.** This idea of newness of life is one of Paul's central themes in his preaching. The gospel does not reform a person it redeems and regenerates, it sanctifies him giving him new life. Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 says If anyone is Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! v.18. All of this is from God...” This crucifixion bears the fruit of a changed life. In Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ.” It is a strong statement born in his personal experience of the power of the cross. One has pointed out that the word crucified is in the perfect tense which means “not simply that he was crucified with Christ in the past, but that he continues to be crucified with Christ day by day. What happened in the past was powerful and is real in the present. It further underlines the truth that his commitment to Jesus and identification with Him in His crucifixion, meant a complete change in his way of life. He saw clearly that adherence to the law did not and could not change him, it was the power of the cross that transformed him. What is meant here is that “I have died because I have been crucified with Christ; my old sinful life has received the condemnation it deserved. As a result L(the old sinful guilty self)



lives no longer. But Christ lives in me; or, since I am plainly I am still alive, I can say that the life I now live is an entirely different life. It is the old "I" (sinful, rebellious, guilty I which lives no longer. It is the new "I" (Justified, cleansed, free from condemnation) who lives by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." **This is a paraphrase of Galatians 2:20.**

Now Paul goes on Galatians 5;24 to give us further insight to what this crucifixion meant to him. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires." We must deliberately surrender our sinful selves for sinful nature to be crucified on the cross of Christ. We will not be crucified with Christ unless we voluntarily give ourselves up to be crucified with Christ. Jesus does not coerce us to be crucified with Him. We take that action in full surrender to Him and He does the rest. And Paul tells us in Galatians 6:14, through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the "world has been crucified to me and I to the world."

Now this is the truth of the word of God, and it is a direct challenge to our self-centered lifestyles. The world here does not mean the people in the world for we are told love them. What Paul rejects or repudiates are the values of the world, its godless materialism, its atheistic humanism, its vanity and arrogance, hypocrisy and its self-centered lifestyles and selfish greed. The old Paul has died to these things and they have no hold on him. He is able to resist their seductive powers. The scriptures make clear that we are not to love these things but set our affections on things that are above. The Christian life is Christ centered not self-centered.

Conclusion

Can you testify with Paul, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world was crucified to me and I to the world.” Have you reached this point on your Christian journey? There is a statement I hear in evangelical circles that needs to be looked at. What people say is “I am not there yet for there is still away to go.” There is an element of truth to that statement but so often it is an excuse for our lack of full surrender to Christ. I think it was Dr. P. Rees within the framework of this thinking who said We are always growing and there is still much ground to be possessed. But it seems that with some it is always I am not there yet. **There are points we should reach.** While it is fundamentally true that we are always progressing in grace, there are some points of the Christian journey that we should have reached long ago. Paul had reached the crucified life and expected that the Christians at Galatia should also have reached that point. We cannot authentically say that we glory in the cross, while we still glory in the self-life, and are still living under the sovereignty and rule of sinful self. “Can you say with Paul I am crucified with Christ?” Have you reached that point in your Christian journey? In what or whom do you glory?