

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST— A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH A CORPORATE GOAL AND RESULT

BY JAMES FITE

As a high-school student—somewhat at the influence and encouragement of a dear brother in Christ who at the time was a seminary student—I began to memorize verses. I did not consider myself a very good memorizer; thus, when a particular verse impressed me from my daily Bible readings, I would write the verse on a card so that I could read and reread it during the day. To form a mnemonic device I would often vocalize phrases of the verse when I was alone. I spontaneously found myself using these phrases as prayers and would often converse with the Lord concerning the verse.¹

Galatians 2:20 was one such verse. I was intrigued by it and spent an unusual amount of time—multiple times a day for over a week—repeatedly returning to each phrase, especially the introductory one: *I am crucified with Christ*. I was puzzled with many questions such as, If Christ was crucified, why do I need to be? How is my crucifixion different from that of Christ the Redeemer? How could I be crucified with Him since I was not even born? If I was crucified, how can I still be living?

Then I had my “Eureka!” moment, when I saw and believed: “*I am crucified with Christ!*” Being quite happy about my “discovery,” that evening I excitedly told my church youth director, “*I am crucified with Christ!*” His discouraging response was, “*I am not.*” So began my journey to understand and experience this verse. On the course of this journey the Lord revealed that my personal experience—indeed, the experience of all the believers—of this verse has a corporate goal and result.

The Context of Galatians 2:20

Galatians 2:19 through 3:3 touches nearly every major topic in this Epistle, including the Triune God, the cross, faith, grace, the fallen man, the flesh, and the redeemed and regenerated believers. The Trinity is implied in the mention of God, Christ, and the Spirit. Christ is the “Son of God” (2:20—implying the Father) and is received as the Spirit (3:2). He is the Triune God who in His economy passed through the steps, the processes, of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection. Because the Son of God loved us, He gave Himself up (2:20) to be crucified for us and for our sins (1:4), referring to Christ’s redemptive death on the cross. That Christ now lives in us implies His resurrection (2:20), which was carried out by “God the Father, who raised Him from the dead” (1:1). Through the word of the gospel—“Jesus Christ was openly portrayed crucified” (3:1)—the believers receive the Spirit “out of the hearing of faith,” a faith that is versus “the works of law” (v. 2). Because we have received the Spirit, we can now live and walk by this Spirit in faith, the faith of the indwelling Christ (cf. 5:25; 2:20). In so doing, we enjoy, rather than annul, the grace of God (v. 21).

In Galatians 2:19-21 Paul uses the nominative pronoun *I* seven times and the objective pronoun *me* three times, thereby amplifying the very personal nature of this passage: