



What does that mean ... “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires ... What does that mean?”

To crucify, as we are more familiar with the term, means to put to death on a cross, as Christ was put to death on a cross—he was crucified. But it is very important that we also understand the broader meaning of crucifixion to understand what Paul means in Galatians 5:24.

- (Galatians 5:24 ESV) And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

To crucify [Greek word - σταυρώω - stow-ro-o/] means to stake, drive down stakes; to fortify with driven stakes, to palisade; to crucify. Metaphorically here it means to crucify the flesh, to destroy its power utterly. [Strong, J. (1995). Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon. Woodside Bible Fellowship.]

Yes, crucify means to put to death on a cross, but it also means to close something in, to fence it in, to destroy (or contain) its power so that it can no longer be an influence on the world around it.

Christ was crucified so he could no longer be an influence in this world, or at least that was the thinking and the intent of the Jewish religious leaders.

- (John 11:47–48 ESV) So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said,

“What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

In their minds, Christ was a powerful, negative influence and a danger to life as they knew it, so he had to be stopped before he destroyed their nation. So they crucified him. But their big problem was that their hateful, murderous plot was a part of God’s plan to bring salvation to this lost planet.

- (Acts 2:23 ESV) This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Their plan of expedience, as stated by Caiaphas, was a diabolical necessity as part of God’s plan for, not only Israel, but for the whole world.

- (John 11:49–52 NASB95) But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.” 51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered

abroad.

So what does this have to do with crucifying the flesh?

Well, as we have studied before, the flesh [Greek word - σάρξ - sarx] is a term that often is used in its basic sense as meaning merely human ... flesh and bones ... the body ... and the sensuous nature of man—the animal nature with cravings which incite to sin. But flesh doesn’t just denote mere human nature ... it speaks of the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God. And our earthly nature, our human nature apart from God, is what Paul tells us that “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified—not past tense—the flesh (the earthly nature/our mere humanity) with its passions and desires.”

This is crucial part of the sanctification process that has already begun for the believer. And, yes, we all need to grow in this area, but those who belong to Christ have come to the realization that the influence of the natural man must be crucified—put to death, fenced in, barricaded, power destroyed, so it can no longer exert its damaging influence on our lives.

In any area and at any time that we allow our mere humanity to rebel and run loose in our lives, we are bringing significant spiritual damage to ourselves and our fellowship. We must take every thought captive in obedience to Christ.

- (2 Corinthians 10:5 ESV) We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Crucifying the flesh means we will move forward in single-mindedness—the mind of Christ.

- (1 Corinthians 2:16 ESV) “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Having crucified the flesh this person is now single-minded and ready to accept and understand

biblical instruction on the goodness of God.

This single-mindedness is opposed to the double-minded person who wavers between God’s ways and man’s ways—between the word of God and mere human opinion.

- (1 Kings 18:21 ESV) And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.

The person who limps back and forth between the ways of God and the ways of humans needs to decide who they are going to follow.

- (James 1:5–8 ESV) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The doubting, wind-tossed person does not destroy the power of the natural mind, and the rebel running loose is unstable in, not just some, but all of his ways. Tossed back and forth between the lower thoughts and ways of humans and the higher thoughts and ways of God and limping between the opinion of humans and the word of God, his faith is compromised as he is tossed back and forth between the flesh and the Spirit.

The single-minded person is a prepared vessel—ready for the instruction of God.

The double-minded person is an unsuitable, unstable vessel that is tossed back and forth between trusting his mere humanity and the word and Spirit of God.