

The High Calling

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The Cruciform Life

By Stan Key

Most Christians know enough biblical theology to assert vigorously that the cross of Jesus is what the gospel is all about. They intuitively understand that Jesus' crucifixion somehow delivers them from guilt, death, and hell. So when someone has the audacity to proclaim that there is not just *one* but *two* crosses that stand in the center of our faith, well, it sounds almost heretical. This issue of *The High Calling* is focused on that second cross. As Holy Week approaches, we want to encourage our readers to think deeply not only about Jesus' cross but also their own.

We make a serious mistake when we conclude that because Jesus suffered, we don't have to. When the cross of Christ is preached in such a way that believers deduce that pain and loss are not an integral part of Christian discipleship, we open the door for every imaginable form of spiritual toxicity. N. T. Wright says it well:

One of the dangers of saying too easily that "the Messiah died for our sins" is to imagine that thereafter there would be no more dying to do, no more sufferings to undergo.... The revolution that began on the cross only works through the cross... Suffering and dying is the way by which the world is changed.[†]

[†] *The Day the Revolution Began* (New York: HarperOne, 2016), 366–68. Emphasis in original.

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Take Up Your Cross

By Matt Friedeman



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Jesus made it crystal clear that being his disciple involved *denying self* and *taking up one's cross* (Mt 16:24). Apparently, he believed that if these basic requirements were neglected one simply could not be his follower. Though some want to spiritualize these words, making them apply to a vague transaction that happens in our hearts, Jesus was surely talking about something much more tangible than that! It is my purpose in this article to answer the question: what does it look like *in practical terms* to deny self and take up one's cross?

For me, the best place to begin in answering this question is by sharing some stories. I have the honor of serving as pastor at DaySpring Community Church (Clinton, MS) where some wonderful Christians I know well are living out the reality of cross-carrying discipleship.

- David is a two-time felon who taught his children how to sell drugs. Today, however, after a life-altering encounter with Jesus, he regularly goes back into the very prison

system that once held him to share Bible studies and lead small groups. This is his cross.

- Noel and his wife Mary, along with their son Samuel, make regular visits to the local Veteran's Home so they can share a loving touch as well as the gospel with men and women who served in the military of our country. This is their cross.
- Every week Jodi, along with 17 other volunteers, goes to an elementary school in a very needy part of our city to conduct a Bible Club for the children. This is her cross.
- For 100 days last year, Patricia stood near an abortion clinic in our state and prayed for the women in crisis who had come there for help, and for the babies they carried. This is her cross.
- Maria volunteers in a facility where she can show hospitality to homeless young ladies who have nowhere else to turn. This is her cross.
- Offering both counsel and a worship experience for women who regret past choices, Maureen makes frequent visits to the state prison facility. This is her cross.

As I think of these men and women (and others), I am challenged by the fact that they have come to the conclusion that Jesus actually meant what he said: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). These brothers and sisters know

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What to Do with the Self?

By E. Stanley Jones (1884–1973)



Perhaps the most prominent theme in the ministry of E. Stanley Jones was helping people deal with the problem of themselves. When Jesus called his disciples to “deny self” he was announcing a revolutionary remedy for all human evils. Abridged and slightly edited, this article is taken from Jones’ book *Victory through Surrender* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966: 17–37).

What to do with the self? Before we go to the Christian answer we must pause to look at some non-Christian answers and ask what happens to the self under their systems. Buddha would get rid of the problems of the self by getting rid of the self! That is the most devastating answer ever given to the problem of the self. When we turn to Vedantic philosophy we find a milder answer, but radical still. Believing that the impersonal Brahma is the ultimate reality, the devotee sits and in meditation tries to pass from the personal self to the Impersonal Essence, Brahma. Just as a raindrop loses itself in the ocean and is absorbed, so the personal self must dissolve into a cosmic ocean of nothingness.

When we turn from the philosophies and religions of the East to modern psychology, we find a complete reversal of the attitudes toward the self, expressed in three affirmations: know thyself, accept thyself, express thyself. But such approaches fail because they put self in the center. And anything that leaves you at the center is off-center. It feeds the disease it is trying to cure, namely, self-centeredness.

If the non-Christian answers, both religious and psychiatric, are inadequate, what has the Christian faith to offer? If it fails here, it fails. For the self is the center of life, individual and collective, and if the self is unhealed, unadjusted, and out of place, then life as a whole is unhealed, unadjusted, and out of place.

As I understand it, the Christian faith asks nothing less and nothing more than self-surrender to God. I say nothing more, for the Self-Realization cults always spell the self with a capital S, meaning you are to realize your self as God. This quest to identify your self as the divine Self ends in a quest. It never arrives. Man is made “in the image of God,” but was never intended to become God. And the attempt to become God is the central sin of religion. It is an attempt to enthrone the self as God, which is the height of self-assertion; and the height of sin. This proud claim to be God is the sin that made Lucifer descend from the heights to the depths.

If the Christian faith does not teach that the self is to become God, neither does it teach self-mortification. “True, it has an air of wisdom, with its forced piety, its self-mortification, and

its severity to the body; but it is of no use at all in combating sensuality” (Col 2:23 NEB). Self-mortification is self-defeating, for it focuses the attention on the self. And it is a law of the mind that “whatever gets your attention gets you.” If your self gets your attention, even a fighting attention, it will get you. You will be a self-preoccupied person, and a self-preoccupied person is a self-defeated person.

If the Christian faith sails between the dangerous rocks of self-deification on the one hand and self-mortification on the other, what is its path? Its path is self-surrender. Note I do not say self-commitment. You may be committed to a person or a project and not surrendered to that person or project.

What is involved is this: we are to hand back to God the self that is handed to us by God; to surrender the one and only thing we own. A hard demand? It seems so.

But I cannot soften it for the New Testament doesn’t soften it. Jesus puts it this way: “If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind” (Lk 9:23 NEB). And Paul interprets that as meaning in his case: “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:19 NEB). Then he puts it as a broad, comprehensive appeal: “Therefore, my brothers, I implore you by God’s mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1 NEB). This demand then seems to be absolute and it demands the ultimate—the you, your self. Not merely your time, your loyalty, your trust, your service, your money, but it demands you—the self—in self-surrender.

Just as my fingers are rooted in the palm of my hand so outward sins are rooted in the unsundered self. Why do we get angry? Because someone has crossed the self. Why do we lie? Because we think it will

be some advantage to the self. Why are we impure? Because we think it will be some pleasure to the self. Why are we jealous and envious? Because someone is getting ahead of the self. All these outer sins are only fruit—the unsundered self is the root. The outer sins are symptoms—the unsundered self is the disease. Quacks treat symptoms, doctors treat diseases. Religion that treats outer symptoms and leaves untouched the central disease, the unsundered self, is religious quackery.

What happens when we surrender to God? Some seem to imply, or directly teach, that the self is wiped out. This is not what the gospel teaches. God does not intend to wipe the self out, he intends to wipe it clean, clean of selfishness. Once cleansed from selfishness, God gives the self back to itself. “Whoever loses his life for my sake he will save it” (Mk 8:35). Lose yourself in the will of God by self-surrender and you will find your self again. It is a paradox but you are never so much your own as when you are most his. We never live until we have gone to our own funeral! ✠



Come and Die!

By Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945)



Few people have understood the second cross better than Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Pastor, theologian, author, and activist, Bonhoeffer literally laid down his life for what he believed. Commenting on Mark 8:31–38, he wants every disciple to understand that the “must” of suffering applies to us as well as to Jesus. This article, abridged and slightly edited, is taken from the fourth chapter of his classic work, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959: 86–91).

Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Jesus. To die on the cross means to die despised and rejected of men. Suffering and rejection are laid upon Jesus as a divine necessity, and every attempt to prevent it is the work of the devil, especially when it comes from his own disciples; for it is in fact an attempt to prevent Christ from being Christ. It is Peter, the rock of the Church, who commits that sin, immediately after he has confessed Jesus as the Messiah and has been appointed to primacy. That shows how the very notion of a suffering Messiah was a scandal to the Church, even in its earliest days. That is not the kind of Lord it wants. Peter’s protest displays his own unwillingness to suffer, and that means that Satan has gained entry into the Church and is trying to tear it away from the cross of its Lord.

Jesus must therefore make it clear beyond all doubt that the “must” of suffering applies to his disciples no less than to himself. Just as Christ is Christ only in virtue of his suffering and rejection, so the disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares his Lord’s suffering and rejection and crucifixion.

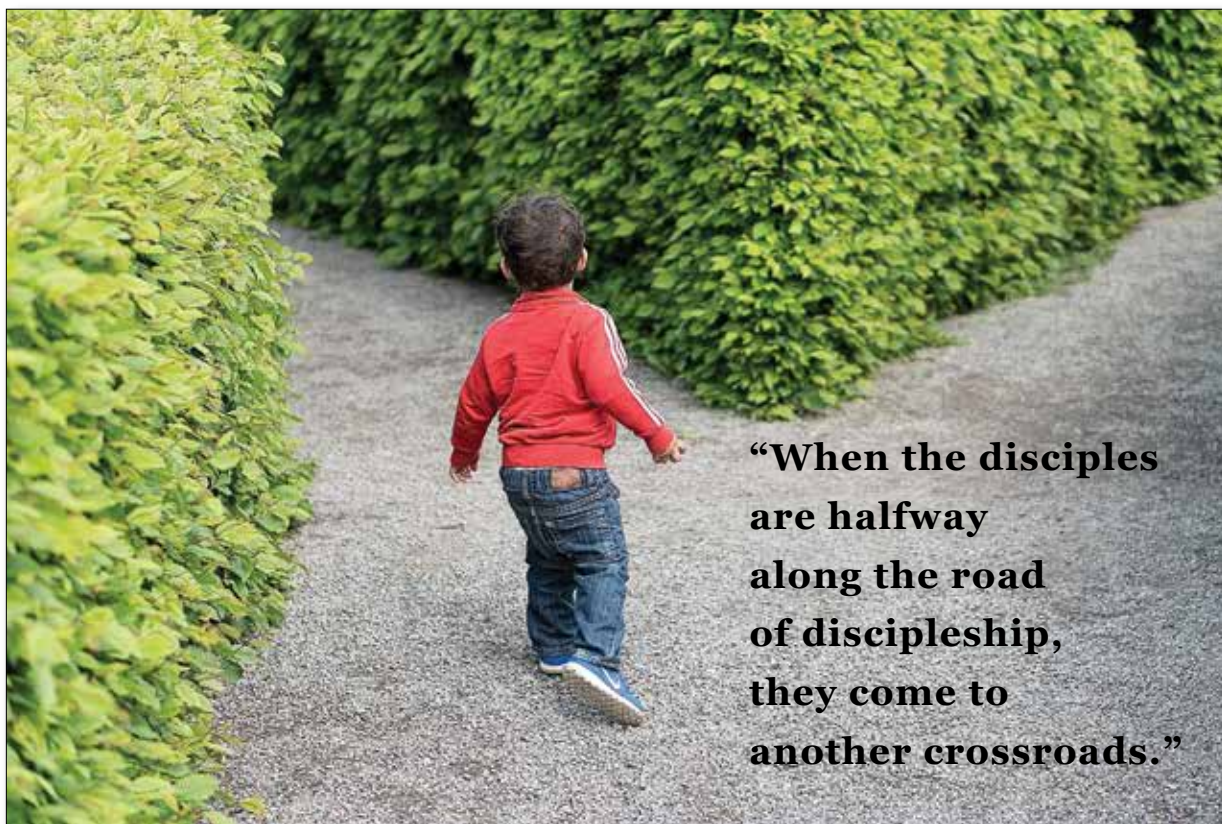
Surprisingly enough, when Jesus begins to unfold this inescapable truth to his disciples, he once more sets them free to choose or reject him. Nobody can be forced, nobody can even be expected to come. He says rather, “If any man would come after me...” Once again, everything is left for the individual to decide. When the disciples are halfway along the road of discipleship, they come to another crossroads. Once more they are left free to choose for themselves.

“If any man would come after me, let him *deny himself*.” The disciple must say to himself the same words Peter said of Christ when he denied him: “I know not this man.” Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of mortification or asceticism. It is not suicide, for there is an element of self-will even in that. To

deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us.

“...and *take up his cross*.” Only when we have become completely oblivious of self are we ready to bear the cross for his sake. To endure the cross is not a tragedy; it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ. When it comes, it is not an accident, but a necessity. It is not the sort of suffering which is inseparable from this mortal life, but the suffering which is an essential part of the specifically Christian life.

Only a man thus totally committed in discipleship can experience the meaning of the cross. The cross is there, right from the beginning, he has only got to pick it up: there is no



“When the disciples are halfway along the road of discipleship, they come to another crossroads.”

need for him to go out and look for a cross for himself, no need for him deliberately to run after suffering. Jesus says that every Christian has his own cross waiting for him, a cross destined and appointed by God. Each must endure his allotted share of suffering and rejection. But each has a different share: some God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering, and gives them the grace of martyrdom, while others he does not allow to be tempted above that which they are able to bear. But it is the one and the same cross in every case.

Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. When Jesus called the rich, young ruler, he was calling him to die, because only the man who is dead to his own will can follow Christ. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die. Suffering, then, is the badge of true discipleship. The disciple is not above his master. That is why Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true Church. ✠

The Three Groans

By N. T. Wright



British theologian and retired Anglican bishop, N. T. Wright, speaks about the cruciform life in a way that stimulates the mind and warms the heart. This article, abridged and slightly edited, is taken from a little volume of sermons entitled *The Crown and the Fire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992). The sermon is entitled “The World, the Church, and the Groaning of the Spirit” (81–94).

Our text for this sermon is Romans 8:17–27. Notice especially how the apostle Paul calls our attention to three groans:

²²For we know that the whole creation has been **groaning** together in the pains of childbirth until now.

²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan** inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.... ²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with **groanings** too deep for words.



**“We might compare Romans 8:17–27
to a Russian doll”**

Inner Circle by James Lee, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jronaldlee/5566380424>

The theme of this passage is the extraordinary vocation of the people of God, within the overarching plan of God for the healing and rebirth of the entire cosmos. Paul calls us to neither rule the world nor renounce it, but to participate in its redemption! We might compare Romans 8:17–27 to a Russian doll; each time we open up one set of ideas, there’s another one, similar but compressed, inside.

In the first stage (vv 19–22) Paul explains that the created order is not evil and will one day be obliterated, but neither is it simply good and will be left as it stands. Follow his thought: the creation is good, but incomplete; good, but at present in bondage; good, but awaiting liberation; good, but pregnant with the future world that is to be born from its womb. The creation is on tiptoe with expectation: and what it’s waiting for is the revelation of the children of God. Why? Because humankind was made to be stewards of creation, naming the animals

and tending the garden are symbols of wise and responsible tenancy in God’s world. The creation is in bondage, and what will liberate it is the glory of God’s children. The world has been “subjected to futility” (v 20). This carries overtones of corruption, decay, and death. The Creator himself has put his creation into this strange state, not out of anger but because only so, granted the rebellion of humankind, could the creation be healed. So, like the children of Israel in Egypt when Moses arrived, the cosmos itself will one day thrill to respond to the wise rule of God’s redeemed—and now redeeming—humanity. As by humans came futility, so by humans shall come freedom. The trees will clap their hands and the valleys will laugh and sing. And within that vision, Paul uses the great image from Genesis 3. No longer Eve but now the whole creation, playing as it were female to God’s male, is groaning in travail together, right up to the present moment. He cuts in behind the simplistic analyses of the world as either simply good or bad. Paul sees the world in pain, the birth-pangs of the new age.

Once we have opened this first Russian doll, we find another inside. In verse 23, Paul transitions from talking about creation

to talking about the Church (“we ourselves”). The Church bears in itself a great conflict, incarnating in its own life the glory and the shame, the majesty and the tragedy, that characterize creation as a whole. The Church also is groaning as she awaits her own full adoption. Paul deliberately uses the same words for the Church as he used for the world: ‘groaning’ (vv 22 and 23), and ‘longing’ (vv 19 and 23).

The implications of this are profound. By comparing the groaning of the Church to the groaning of the cosmos, Paul is deliberately interpreting the two in relation to each other. The present task of the Church is not only to share the sufferings of Christ, but in doing so to share and bear the sufferings of the world—and, indeed, to discover that those vocations are

two ways of saying the same thing; so that the pain of the world, which was heaped once and for all on to the Messiah on the cross, is now strangely to be shared by those who suffer with him. The Church is not insulated from the pain of the world, but is to become for the world what Jesus was for the world, the place where its pain and grief may be focused and concentrated, and so healed. Some may feel this is a risky line of thought; but faced with Romans 8, and for that matter Colossians 1:24 and 2 Corinthians 4:7–12, I am certain that it is a Pauline one.

So, back to our Russian dolls. The first picture, the groaning of creation, contained clear signs that a second was hidden within it. But now this second picture contains the clear hint that there is yet a third level, corresponding with and giving full meaning to the first two. Once again, there is a surprise. In talking about the Spirit today we are used to the note of triumph, of a supernatural dimension enabling Christians to rise above the

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Our Ultimate Weapon

By Dennis Kinlaw (1922–2017)



In his important book *The Mind of Christ* (Wilmore: Francis Asbury Press, 1998), Dr. Kinlaw describes how the Holy Spirit can completely transform a person's thinking so that he or she actually thinks like Christ thinks so that the cross (self-giving love) becomes normative and the defining reality of a person's life. In this article, Kinlaw gives us a living illustration of what this looks like in practical terms (108–09).

I recently got acquainted with Josef Tson, the pastor of a large Baptist church in western Romania. Until a few years ago, the Romanian Communist Party was one of the most brutal in the world. As a Christian pastor, Josef spoke out on some issues and angered the government. So they decided to destroy him. They came in and stripped his library of all his books. Two books were quite worn and had no jackets on them, so the soldiers left them behind. One was Martin Niemoller's account of his suffering under Adolf Hitler. The other was *Abundant Living*, a devotional book by E. Stanley Jones.

This Romanian pastor put Martin Niemoller's book on his nightstand to give him strength through the night. He put E. Stanley Jones' book on the shelf in his study.

The government then sent the police to interrogate Josef five days a week and up to seven hours a day. The intent was to destroy him. Oftentimes they would question him with a loaded pistol on the table in front of the interrogator. One day, coming home after a very grueling period of questioning, Josef went into his study, locked the door, and fell to the floor, sobbing. "God," he said, "I can't take any more."

He thought he heard a voice saying, "Josef, get up. Read the book on the shelf."

Josef said there was no problem knowing which book to read; there was only one left! So he pulled down E. Stanley Jones' book and opened it. The devotional for that day was on "How to Live above Your Circumstances." It was about Jesus facing the cross. Jones said that Jesus did not resist the cross; he embraced it.

Josef said, "God, you surely don't mean I'm supposed to embrace my interrogators!"

"Yes," the Lord said, "that's exactly what I mean."

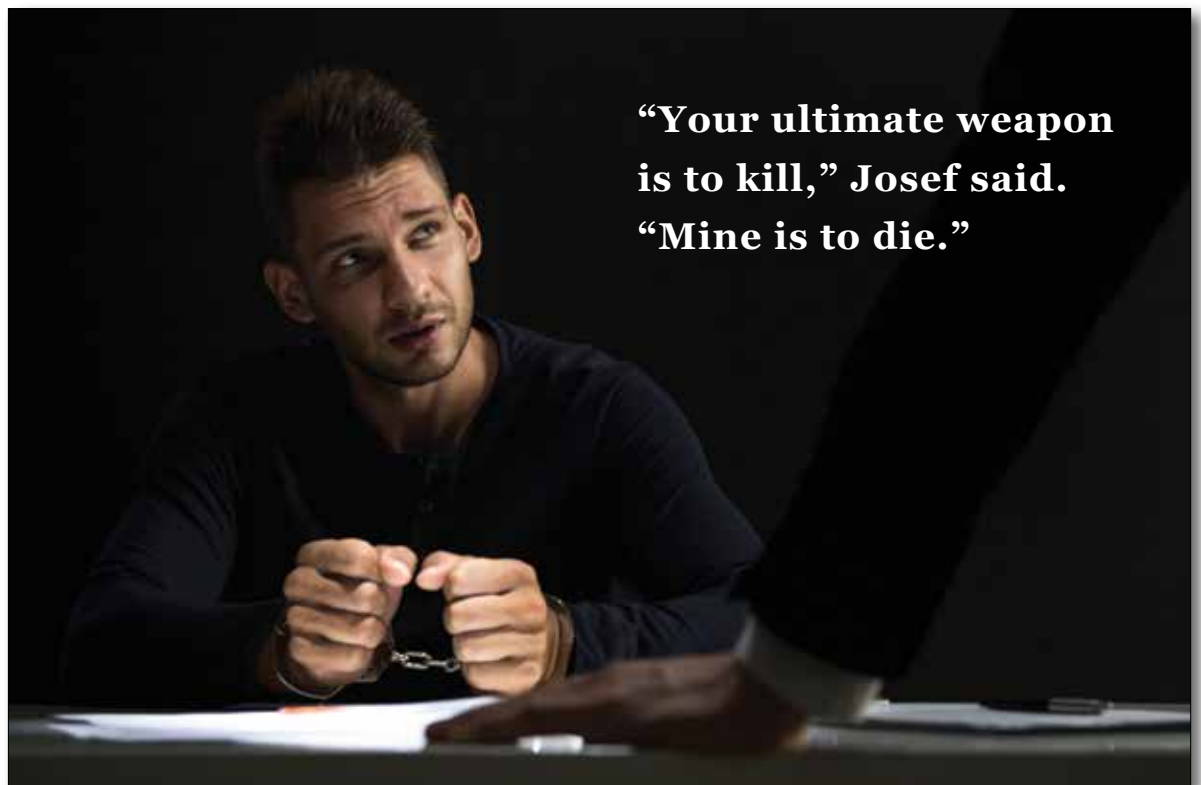
"Well, God, if you want me to do that, you must do something in my heart that you have never done before."

Josef said that's exactly what the Lord did. When he walked back into the interrogation room, he was ready to embrace his trial. He said the change in the atmosphere was almost comical. Before, the pastor had been in trauma; but now the chief interrogator was in trauma because he had lost control of his subject! The chief interrogator was beside himself. He finally spun in anger on the pastor and said, "You are stupid. I guess we'll just have to go ahead and kill you."

Josef found himself saying, "I understand, sir. That's your ultimate weapon. When everything else has failed, you can always kill. But you know, I have an ultimate weapon, too. And when you use your ultimate weapon, I get to use mine."

"And what's your 'ultimate weapon?'" the Communist angrily demanded.

"Your ultimate weapon is to kill," Josef said. "Mine is to die. When I die, I will be much better off. But your troubles will just



be beginning. You see, every tape of every sermon that I have ever preached will be sprinkled with my blood. So you'll have much more trouble with me dead than you have with me alive!"

The Communist shouted, "Take him out!"

A few weeks later, Josef heard through the grapevine that the Communists were saying he was crazy because he wanted to be a martyr. "But we're no fools," the Communists said. So they stopped interrogating him. Josef said he could not even argue them into killing him then.

"When I was pulling every string to try to save my life, I was at my wit's end," Josef told me. "But when I turned the strings loose and let Christ control my life completely, I was free." ✠

His Cross and Ours

By John R. W. Stott (1921–2011)



In his classic book *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 1986), John Stott, after writing many chapters on *Christ's* cross, turns to *ours*. He wants us to understand that the call to follow Jesus is a call to come and die with him. Abridged and slightly edited, this article is taken from a chapter entitled “Self-Understanding and Self-Giving” (267–87).

The invitation of Jesus is plain: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mk 8:34). Jesus has just for the first time clearly predicted his sufferings and death. It “must” happen to him, he says (Mk 8:31). But now he expresses implicitly a “must” for his followers as well. He must go to the cross and they must take up their cross and follow him. Indeed, they must do it “daily” (Lk 9:23). The one who does not take his cross and follow him is not worthy of him and cannot be his disciple (Mt 10:38; Lk 14:27). In this way, one might say, every Christian is both a Simon of Cyrene and a Barabbas. Like Barabbas, we escape the cross, for Christ died in our place. Like Simon of Cyrene, we carry the cross, for he calls us to take it up and follow him.

The Romans had made crucifixion a common sight. Every rebel condemned to crucifixion was compelled to carry his cross, or at least the *patibulum* (the cross beam), to the scene of his execution. To take up our cross, therefore, is “to put oneself into the position of a condemned man on his way to execution” (H. B. Swete). It is surely self-denial which, by this vivid imagery, Jesus is describing. To deny ourselves is to behave toward ourselves as Peter did toward Jesus when he denied him three times. The verb is the same (*aparneomai*). He disowned him, repudiated him, turned his back on him. Self-denial is not denying to ourselves luxuries such as chocolates and wine (though it may include this); it is actually denying or disowning ourselves, renouncing our supposed right to go our own way. “To deny oneself is... to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness” (C. E. B. Cranfield).

Paul writes in his letters of three different deaths and resurrections, which are part and parcel of our Christian experience. Much confusion arises when we fail to distinguish between them.

The first is the death to sin and subsequent life to God, which happens to all Christians by virtue of our union with Christ. By it we share in the benefits both of Christ's death (its forgiveness) and of his resurrection (its power). This is inherent in our conversion/baptism.

The second is the death to self, called variously taking up the cross, or denying, crucifying or mortifying ourselves. As a result,

we live a life of fellowship with God. This death is not something that has happened to us and that we are now told to “reckon” or remember, but something we must deliberately do ourselves, by the power of the Spirit, putting our old nature to death. But we have to maintain this attitude, that is, take up the cross daily.

The third kind of death and resurrection is the carrying about in our bodies of the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in them (2 Cor 4:9–10). Plainly the arena for this is our bodies. It refers to their infirmity, persecution, and mortality.

The community of the cross is essentially a community of self-giving love, expressed in the worship of God and in the service of others. This biblical vision of suffering service has been largely eclipsed in our day by the unbiblical “prosperity gospel” (which guarantees personal success) and by triumphalist notions of mission. By contrast, Paul dared to write to the Corinthians: “so then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (2 Cor 4:12). The cross lies at the very heart of mission.

As an illustration of how a Christian community can be shaped and influenced by the cross, I would like to mention the Moravian Brethren, founded by Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf

(1700–1760). In 1722 he welcomed some pietistic refugees from Moravia and Bohemia to his estate in Saxony, where he helped them to form a community under the name “Herrnhut.” The Moravians' stress was on Christianity as a religion of the cross and of the heart. They defined a Christian as one who has “an inseparable friendship with the Lamb, the slaughtered Lamb.” Their seal bore the inscription in Latin “Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow him.”



“Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow him.”

Their emphasis on the cross brought them to genuine humility and penitence. But it also gave them a strong assurance of salvation and quiet confidence in God. “We are the Savior's happy people,” Zinzendorf said. It was, in fact, their joy and fearlessness when face to face with death as their ship was sinking in an Atlantic storm that brought John Wesley under conviction of sin and was an important link in the chain that led to his conversion.

But the Moravians are best known as a missionary movement. It was the cross that stimulated Zinzendorf and his followers to this expression of self-giving love. Between 1732 and 1736, Moravian missions were founded in the Caribbean, Greenland, Lapland, North and South America, and South Africa, while later they began missionary work in Labrador, among Australian Aborigines and on the Tibetan border. The heathen know there is a God, taught Zinzendorf, but they need to know of the Savior who died for them. “Tell them about the Lamb of God,” he urged, “till you can tell them no more.” ✠

Not I, but Christ

By A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)

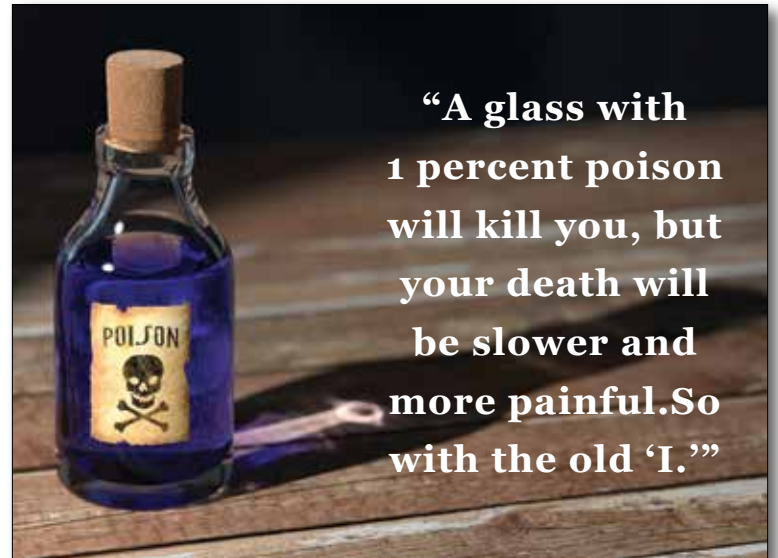


Perhaps the reason A. W. Tozer is still read and appreciated today, over 50 years after his death, is because he says things that almost no one else is saying. While most contemporary preachers rarely mention the cross, it was a primary theme in the ministry of Tozer. This article is taken from a recent book that seeks to distill his best teaching on the topic of the cross and its meaning for the Christian life (*The Crucified Life*, Ventura: Regal, 2011). This article is a slightly edited abridgment of chapter 13, “The Beauty of Contradictions” (157–66).

Two contradictory schools of thought can be found among Christians today. I am not referring to Calvinism and Arminianism, nor am I thinking of liberalism and fundamentalism. I’m referring to the reason we think Jesus came into the world and the purpose for which he died.

One school of thought holds that Jesus came to help us. He came and died on a cross to take us out of the conflicts and the twisted situations we get into during our lives. The thinking is that we are basically good people who occasionally do bad things. Jesus came to make us better people, to help us with self-improvement. Trusting Christ means that we can be more popular and successful. Feelings of low self-esteem can be quickly eradicated. Jesus helps us to be the best we can possibly be. Jesus came to solve our problems, bolster our ego, and make us happy and cheerful.

The other school of thought is that Jesus came to put an end to the self; not educate it, polish it, or improve it, but to kill it. The “I” must be eliminated in its entirety for Christ to hold his rightful position in our lives. No matter how much it is cleaned up, it still contains an irredeemable core of corruption. The old self must go, regardless of the cost. The key verse to help us know how to deal with the old man is Galatians 2:20. Actually, the verse is Paul’s personal testimony.



**“A glass with
1 percent poison
will kill you, but
your death will
be slower and
more painful. So
with the old ‘I.’”**

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. (Galatians 2:20 KJV)

This verse has a number of statements that, on the surface, appear to be contradictory. Paul starts by saying, “I am crucified.” But how can one who has been killed tell us about it? Dead people don’t talk. No one has ever said, “Doctor, call the undertaker because I’m dead.” Then he says, “Nevertheless I live.” If he has been crucified, how then can he live? He complicates things by saying “yet not I.” And then he makes a confusing situation even more complex by speaking about the life he “now lives in the flesh.” How are we to make sense of all this?

The old “I” must be absolutely crucified. That is what Paul is talking about in Galatians 2:20. Nobody can die partially. Either a person is dead or he is alive. This is much like drinking a glass of water with poison in it. That glass does not have to be filled 100 percent with poison to kill you. Even if only 1 percent of the liquid is poison, it will do the trick. In fact, such a situation is even *more* dangerous because the poison is less obvious. A glass with 100 percent poison will kill you right away. A glass with 1 percent poison will kill you, but your death will be slower and more painful. So with the old “I.” If there is even a small portion (1 percent) that remains, you remain in mortal danger. That little bit can destroy the life of God in you just as surely as if the entire self were poison. The old self must go in its entirety so that the new can come in its entirety. Only when the old self is crucified and fully dead can the presence of Christ permeate every fiber of our being. “Not I, but Christ.”

We misunderstand the gospel when we conclude that the purpose of Christ’s coming and dying on a cross was to pay our debt so that we could go to heaven when we died. Paul’s testimony in Galatians 2:20 reminds us that God’s purpose in sending his Son was to destroy the “I” so that Christ could live fully in us! ✨

No Scar?

By Amy Carmichael

*Hast thou no scar?
No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,
Hast thou no scar?*

*Hast thou no wound?
Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent,
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned:
Hast thou no wound?*

*No wound, no scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And, pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole: can he have followed far
Who has no wound nor scar?*

Yes, there are *two* crosses in the gospel: his cross and ours. Jesus' death delivers us from sin, but not from suffering! To fail to see the significance of our cross in relation to his is to separate what God has joined together. When we omit the second cross from the gospel, we pollute our doctrine, compromise our mission, and jeopardize our salvation! Though Jesus' cross is obviously the important one, its work will never be brought to completion until we grasp the reality of our own. It is only as our lives become cruciform (having the shape of a cross), that we begin to walk as authentic disciples of Jesus. Look how the New Testament underscores the fundamental importance of this second cross and the vital significance of suffering in the life of the Christian:

- “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23).
- “When he had said this, he showed them his hands and side.... [and said to them], ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you’” (Jn 20:20–21).
- Paul and Barnabas encouraged the disciples, “saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
- “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom 6:3).
- “I die every day!” (1 Cor 15:31).
- “I have been crucified with Christ...” (Gal 2:20).
- “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Phil 1:29).

Perhaps nowhere in the New Testament is the cruciform life portrayed with greater poignancy than in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Corinth Community Church had a reputation for being a happening place. Today, we would probably call it a trendy megachurch, known for exciting worship, outstanding preaching, and cutting-edge programs. All the gifts of the

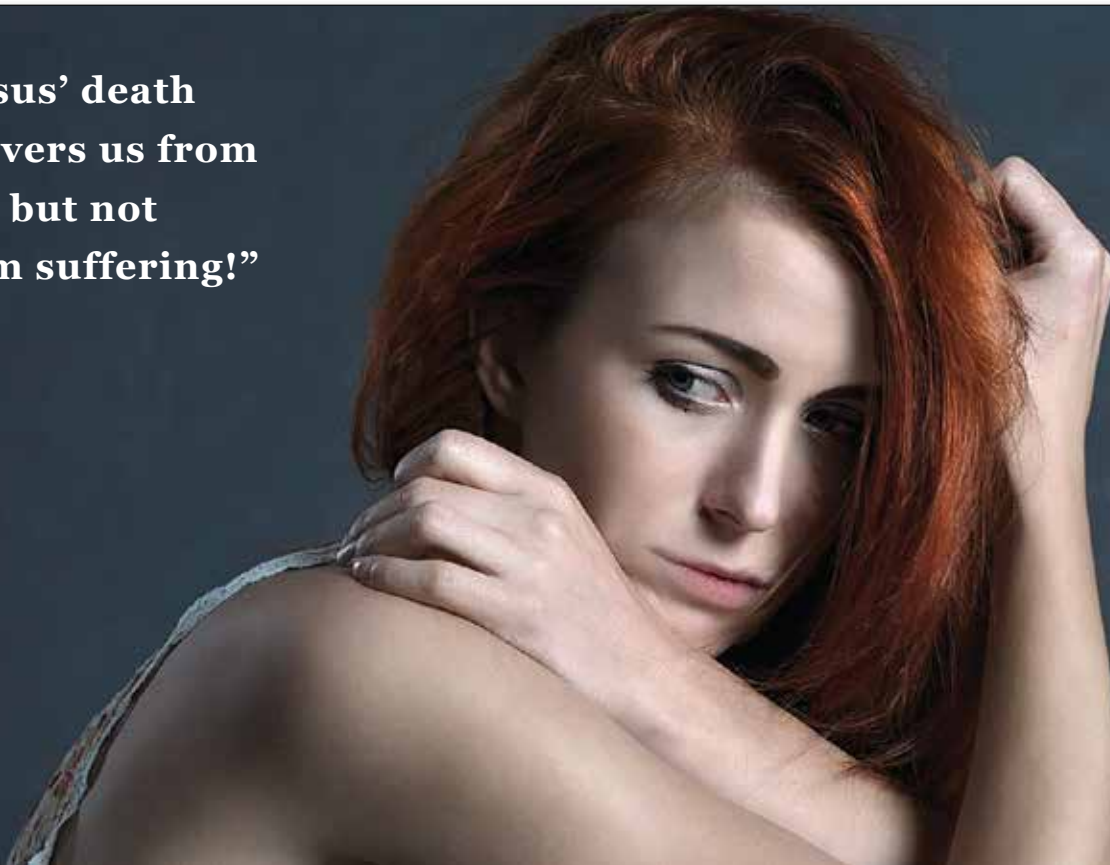
Spirit were manifest in this amazing church, and miracles were common. Paul's two letters, however, reveal that under the shiny exterior, the community was a seething cauldron of division, immorality, false teaching, and lack of love.

Nowhere is Paul's concern more evident than when he speaks about the “super apostles” who were leading the church (2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). These guys were superstars. They preached with power and performed signs and wonders. In our day, they would have been bestselling authors and would have hosted radio shows listened to by hundreds of thousands. They would wear Rolex watches and travel in private jets. Theirs was an early form of the prosperity gospel, and the people of Corinth thronged to sit at their feet. In 2 Corinthians, Paul exposes the basic flaw in their theology: their gospel had no cross. Oh, they gave lip service to Jesus' death, but their emphasis was on how his cross delivers us from the trials and tribulations of this world. Jesus died, they claimed, so that we can be healthy, wealthy, and happy. Making a bad situation even worse, their gospel omitted the second cross entirely!

In his first epistle, Paul tried to deal with the situation gently and diplomatically. But in his second letter, the situation had become so bad he took off his gloves and confronted the situation head on! In omitting the second cross, these bigshot preachers were changing the very nature of the gospel itself! They were preaching “another Jesus” and theirs was “a different gospel” (see 2 Cor 11:4). Paul could not be silent when the very integrity of biblical truth was at stake and souls were hanging in the balance. These prosperity preachers were “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor 11:13).

Paul felt cornered. These false teachers were undermining his apostolic authority. Should he defend himself? Should he counter-attack? But how? What could he do to validate the authenticity of his ministry? He could, perhaps, mention his theological education or how he had personally seen the risen

**“Jesus' death
delivers us from
sin, but not
from suffering!”**



Lord on the Damascus Road. Or he could recount the many miracles he had performed and the number of churches he had planted. But Paul knew that playing spiritual one-upmanship would get him nowhere with these super apostles.

So what could he do to establish the authenticity of his apostolic ministry? The tactic Paul chose was brilliant. Bypassing all secondary issues, he went straight to the crux of the matter. He validated his apostolic calling by talking about the cross, specifically that *second* cross. In 2 Corinthians 4:7–12, 6:4–10, and 12:7–13, Paul sets forth his apostolic pedigree by drawing attention not to his victories and successes, not to his mystical experiences and visions, not to his prosperous and happy circumstances, but to his hardships and trials. It wasn't health, wealth, and happiness that validated his ministry but rather afflictions, persecutions, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, sleepless nights, hunger, etc. Paul validates his ministry by showing the cruciform nature of his life.

But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.... ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. (2 Corinthians 11:21b–30)

Paul is saying to the spiritual big shots of Corinth: “OK, those are *my* apostolic credentials! Now, would you like to show me *yours*?”

Perhaps no message needs more to be heard in the American church today than the gospel of the two crosses. Jesus laid down his life for others and invites us to imitate his example. He died so that we can die too. When our lives are not cruciform, we betray the very gospel we preach! This issue of *The High Calling* is a passionate cry for the people of God to rediscover that second cross. Until we do, we risk succeeding at doing the wrong thing. ✦

**Must Jesus bear the cross alone:
And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for ev'ry one,
And there's a cross for me.
—Thomas Shepherd (1693)**

Right Side Up

By Stan Key

(What Peter might have thought as he remembered the crucifixion of Jesus.)

*On Calvary's hill, just out of town,
My shattered world was upside down.
It seemed my life had been accursed
For all I knew had been reversed!
I'd turned my back on everything
So I could follow this new king;
I thought that he would be the key
To comfort and prosperity.
And now he's there; exposed; the shame!
Is this the reason that he came?
Is this a joke; some cruel mistake?
The world's Messiah on a stake?*

*But in the darkness of this hour
I catch a glimmer of God's power:
The power of love that took our hate
And did not once retaliate.
Such things are much to vast for me;
I cannot grasp, I cannot see,
Unless my eyes are touched by grace
to see his reassuring face.
I've come, dear Lord, to pause and think
About the cup you chose to drink:
Enable me to understand
The sovereign power of nail-pierced hand.*

*It seems like such a contradiction
That blessing comes from malediction!
But in your brokenness is health
And in your poverty my wealth.
Your death has brought to me my life
The war you fought has calmed my strife.
The cross, the cross! It's only here
That everything in life is clear.
So let this cross now be the norm;
Let all my ways be cruciform!
Thank you, Lord, you drank the cup,
At last my world is right side up!*

For Someone Who Is Hurting

By Madame Guyon (1648–1717)

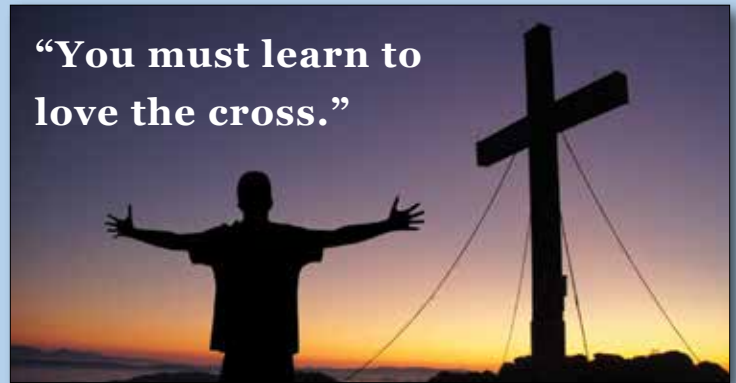


Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon (commonly known as Madame Guyon) was a French widow of deep spiritual sensitivity whose life and writings have had a profound influence on thousands, including Fénelon, Zinzendorf, John Wesley, Hudson Taylor, Watchman Nee, etc. King Louis XIV saw her as a threat and accused

her of heresy, throwing her in the Bastille. She wrote hundreds of letters of spiritual counsel to a wide audience of people who sought her wisdom. This article is a slightly edited abridgment taken from perhaps her most influential book, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, first published in 1685. This segment offers counsel to someone who is struggling to understand the meaning of suffering (Gardiner: Christian Books, 1975: 37–39).

You must be patient in all the suffering that God sends you. If your love for the Lord is pure, you will love him as much on Calvary (where he was crucified) as on Mt. Tabor (where he was transfigured). The Lord Jesus loved his Father on Tabor, but he loved him no less on Calvary. Surely, then, you should love the Lord as much on (your) Calvary, for it was there that he made the greatest display of his love.

There is a possibility that you might make a mistake concerning your abandonment to the Lord. You may abandon yourself to the Lord hoping and expecting always to be caressed and loved and spiritually blessed by him. You, who have given yourself to the Lord during some pleasant season, please take note of this: if you gave yourself to him to be *blessed* and to be *loved*, you cannot suddenly turn around and take back your life at another season—when you are being *crucified*!



You must learn to love the cross. He who does not love the cross does not love the things of God (Mt 16:23). It is impossible for you to truly love the Lord without loving the cross. The believer who loves the cross finds that even the bitterest things that come his way are sweet. Here is a true spiritual principle that the Lord will not deny: God gives us the cross, and then the cross gives us God.

So, how will you respond when the Lord allows the cross in your life? Let me encourage you to respond this way. As soon as anything comes to you in the form of suffering, at that very moment resign yourself to God. *Accept the matter*. In that moment give yourself up to him as a sacrifice. By doing this, you will make a wonderful discovery: the cross will not be nearly as burdensome as you first feared. Receive it as from God, no matter what it is. The burden is far lighter this way.

Even though you utterly abandon yourself to the Lord and completely resign yourself to suffering, this will not prevent you from feeling the weight of that cross. Pain is an inescapable aspect of the cross. Without it, there has been no cross at all. Suffering is woven into the nature of the cross. So, whether you bear the cross in weakness or in strength, *bear it*. ✠

The Methods of FAS Ministries

By Charlie Fiskeaux, Special Assistant to the President for Development

The Francis Asbury Society exists for a single purpose: to proclaim the message of Biblical holiness that we can be “wholly devoted to God.” All of our activities are focused on this single purpose. But what are the methods that FAS uses to proclaim this message? They are all identified under three strategic efforts: speaking, publishing, and discipling.

The *speaking* ministry is implemented through a network of 25 gifted speaker-evangelists who proclaim the gospel message wherever there is an open door; specifically, revival and renewal services, retreats, conferences, camp meetings, and international settings.

Publishing is a core ministry of FAS that has been strategic from our founding. It includes print and media resources such as books, audios, videos, and e-books. *The High Calling* is an essential, bi-monthly publication for presenting our message to supporters and the public. The monthly e-newsletter, *Ministry Matters*, presents current events for FAS ministries.

Discipling is a multi-faceted ministry that promotes personal, spiritual growth through varied methods such as Bible studies,

intercessory prayer, regional clergy groups, theological dialogue, cooperative missions, and annual retreats and conferences.

While every FAS ministry exists under one of these three areas, it is interesting to know that some are rather unique; such as the annual Hemlock Inn Retreats, Titus Women’s ministry, Latin America Ministry, Bolivian Evangelical University’s cattle ranch, Covenant Fellowship, Pastor’s Uplift daily prayer e-letters, *Shepherd’s Watch*, Holiness Camp Meeting President’s conference, Kinlaw Legacy Fund, Francis Asbury Institute—and the list continues. But the point is that while the ministries of FAS are quite varied, all are focused on the single purpose of proclaiming the message that we can be “wholly devoted to God.”

If this message or some of these ministries touch your heart, you can participate not only by praying for us but also with your contribution supporting FAS sent to PO Box 7, Wilmore, KY 40390. If your preferred means is online, you can contribute online at www.francisasburysociety.com/support. ✠

that taking up the cross is more than an internal spiritualized “death-to-self.” They show us that following Jesus has consequences, in practical terms, in the way we spend our time and money, in the choices we make, and in the people we choose to hang out with.

Jesus’ cross was very real and physical. And though it was certainly unique and unrepeatable, he modeled a lifestyle that he expects us to emulate. As we follow him and imitate his example, we discover our own call to self-denial, and a cross that is tailor-made for our own backs. In fact, it is only as we begin to carry this cross that we discover the purpose for which we were born!

In the 18th century, speaking to the early Methodists, John Wesley put it this way:

Let us be employed, not in the highest, but in the meanest, and not in the easiest but the hottest, service—ease and plenty we leave to those that want them. Let us go on in toil, in weariness, in painfulness, in cold or hunger, so we may but testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24). The rich, the honorable, the great, we are thoroughly willing (if it be the will of our Lord) to leave to you. Only let us alone with the poor, the vulgar, the base, the outcasts of men. Take also to yourselves ‘the saints of the world’: but suffer us ‘to call sinners to repentance’; even the most vile, the most ignorant, the most abandoned, the most fierce and savage of whom we can hear. To these we will go forth in the name of our Lord, desiring nothing, receiving nothing of any man (save the bread we eat while we are under his roof), and let it be seen whether God has sent us.’

† *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part III. Works (BE), 11, 315–16.*

“And our crosses—the ones Jesus has in mind for each one of us—will enable us to fulfill the unique Kingdom purpose for which we were created.”



Apparently, the Methodist cross consisted of being channels of grace to the “poor, the vulgar, the base, the outcasts of men.” Is this not the explanation for the growth and influence of the 18th century revival? This is what made early Methodism such a powerful force for the Kingdom of God in the world.

When Jesus called us to deny ourselves and take up our cross, he was inviting us to discover the unique Kingdom purpose for which we were created. Though carrying the cross will obviously involve hardship and pain, it will at the same time help us discover our purpose and mission in life! What greater privilege is there than that?

What about you? Have you responded to Jesus’ invitation to take up *your* cross? If you are serious about following him, then you need to understand that he may well lead you as he led his original disciples, and the early Methodists, as well as the men and women at DaySpring Community Church. He may be asking you to begin to spend time with the poor, the vulgar, the outcasts, the vile, the ignorant, the abandoned, and those considered the most savage of our generation.

Is it not strange that many churches today make heroic efforts to put in motion their Facebook ads and witty outreach campaigns to specifically target the middle- and upper-middle-class families of their community so that their church can be the coolest, most “happening” worship hot-spot in town. I’m so proud (sanctified pride, of course!) of the men and women of our congregation, who have decided to run *toward* the sound of pain, toward the places in our community that are needy and desperate. In doing so, they have made a conscious decision to deny themselves and take up their cross.

But here’s the surprise. While it is costly and painful to carry the cross, refusing to carry it is even costlier and more painful!

Why? Because when I reject my cross, the specific custom-made cross designed uniquely for me, I am turning my back on the very thing that gives my life meaning and purpose. When Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn” (Mt 5:4), he did not speak pious sentimentality. He was actually describing how things work in the Kingdom of God! There is great blessing that comes to the person whose heart breaks over the very same things that break the heart of God. As a pastor, I’ve discovered that the most buoyant and joyful people in our congregation are the very ones who are entering in to the pains and sufferings of this world. As Jesus promised, these are the ones who are “blessed.”

Jesus still invites us to follow him. Where is he headed? He’s going to hang out with the poor, the disabled, the oppressed, and the vile. He wants you to follow. But to do so, you’ll have to take up *your* cross. ✠

pain and grief of the world and enter a realm of joy and peace. But that isn't Paul's picture. For him, it is precisely because of the Spirit that the Church shares the groaning of the world. And how could it be otherwise, if the task laid on the Church is that she co-suffer with the Messiah? If it were not for the Spirit, such an idea might actually be blasphemous.

So we finally come to the deep heart of the passage, verses 26–27. Here Paul tells us that what is true of the world and the Church is actually true also of the Spirit. *Within* the groaning of creation, and *within* the groaning of the Church, God—this strange God—is groaning also. We look at the world and long to bring to it the justice and peace for which it yearns. And we don't know how to do it. We don't even know how to pray, or what to pray for. But at the very moment of this weakness, we have the assurance that the Spirit is doing the praying that we cannot do. God is sharing, by his Spirit, in the groaning of creation and the groaning of the Church. Prayer, at the deepest level, is here understood as God calling to God from within the created and groaning world, God calling to God from within the redeemed and groaning Church, God the Spirit, dwelling in the hearts of her people as they dwell in the midst of the broken world, and calling to God the Father, and being certainly heard.

In conclusion, I want to apply this briefly where it may matter most. Most Christians have people on their hearts and minds, people in pain who have asked our prayers. If you're like me, half the time you won't know what to pray for. But in that inarticulate state there is a longing, a groaning, a resonating with their pain, which tells us that we are becoming on their behalf the place of prayer, of the Spirit's prayer, the prayer too deep for words. ✠

“Yes, following Jesus will mean disappointment, failure, frustration, muddle, misunderstanding, pain, and sorrow—and those are just the ‘first-world problems.’ Some Christians, even while I have been working on this book, have been beheaded for their faith.”
N. T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began* (New York: HarperOne, 2016), 409f

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