

Our Cross



*Is our **only** Key to Heaven*

“I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Luke 13:5

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

Matt 16:24-25

WHATEVER CAPTIVATES THE MIND POSSESSES THE SOUL

If Christ and our cross doesn't captivate our mind so we live for Him, we are in danger of something else possesses our souls.

'For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.'

Rom 8:6

Our cross is our only Key to Heaven

How many people are there who claim to follow the Christian faith that have never had a heartfelt conviction of their sinfulness, and never really repented from their declaration of independence to depend totally on God? And as a result they adamantly believe that if we live good lives God will take us home.

How many have heard that you only have to know you need God's love to be welcomed into His family. So any idea of the radical work of self denial isn't seriously considered to be necessary. Isn't this bringing God down to our fallen human level so we get Him to do what we want? What happened to the Majesty, the Holiness, and the Sovereignty of God who rules all things according to His will and purpose?

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life of God. He is the narrow way. He is the door to life. He died for those who will give up everything to be with Him. In order to share in His life we have to share in His death by dying to self so we can live for Him as He lives in us. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* John 3:16

Whoever believes in Christ surrenders everything to Christ as Lord and Saviour in order to receive eternal life. Whoever says he believes and keeps his life loses his life. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."
Luke 9:24

It has often been the case that the Bible has been used to teach that the only requirement we need to get to heaven is that we believe that Jesus died for the sins of the world because Jesus didn't come to judge but to save. (John 3:16-17) However this is serious cherry picking that denies the whole truth. Jesus also said: *"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*
Luke 13:5

Repentance means we have to actually acknowledge we have a serious problem with our relationship with God because we do what we want and desire while all along refusing to live according to His will.

Becoming a Christian has been simplified to the point of making the meaning of God's unchangeable word unimportant. And we endeavour to get people to say the words we choose to get them saved without

understanding what is required. *‘That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;’*

Rom 10:9

Baptism, confirmation, Sunday school, Bible study, Church attendance, willing service and sharing in the bread and the blood of Christ mean absolutely nothing if we haven't taken up our cross to die with Christ. If we don't have our key by taking up our cross to die with Christ we cannot claim to have His life. If we have not begun to live for Christ we need to seriously consider if we have become Christians on our own terms. Because the confession we often parrot has been separated from the truth and the real meaning needed to be saved. Confession without God's meaning means nothing. If we can be saved by confessing Jesus without humbling ourselves to the fact as Lord He must control our entire life as we become His servants in all things, then He is not our Lord or our saviour. As a result of believing anything we have nothing.

How many have believed that they are going to heaven because they have been baptised and go to Church? Not understanding that baptism is the physical example of personal death to self in order to be raised up in newness of life with Christ. Baptism doesn't save; it is just a declaration of our death to self. Those who has died in Christ can live in Christ.

‘Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;’

Rom 6:4-6

How can we know for sure what we need if we are serious about eternal life? We must follow the teaching of Christ who died so we can live. The Bible clearly teaches us that Jesus declared to those who would follow Him that the real proof of repentance is not what we say, it's not confession of some religious formula, it's not a big smile and a charismatic nature, it's not lovely words, and it's not a good education, it's not church attendance, nor is it long prayers, and it's not fervent worship. The real proof of repentance is our death on a cross so we live in and for Christ as He lives in us.

Gal 2:20

The Lord Jesus didn't come to make us happy, He didn't come to guarantee good health, He didn't come to make us successful in business, and He didn't come to make us happy in the world. He didn't come to be some sort of domesticated house boy; He came so that we might be born again by the Spirit so that we can be transformed into His image and likeness. And while the world is fallen from the perfection before Adam and Eve sinned, so that every disagreeable thing befalls all who live in it, it is the perfect place to get our attention so that we come to repentance, and following that, it is our training ground in righteousness. All things that bother us in the world become our teaching aids so that we live according to the new life of God in us and put aside any remaining attachments to the world.

Taking up our cross is the proof we have understood the necessity to separate ourselves from the ways of the world, and undertaken to die to self determination in order to follow Jesus so we obey Him as the only valid reason for living. In order to have life we must die to our self existence according to the ways of the world. The cross Jesus offers to all who would have eternal life is the way of death to self as the only wonderful key to heaven. To refuse this cross is to announce to all that we are going our own way. So in His own words, we are unworthy of Him. (Matt 10:38) While the cross we bear is death to self, it is also the only way we can save our lives.

Matt 16:25

Jesus' also calls us to take up our cross as our daily experience, not just once and then lay it down, but daily. (Luke 9:23) Whoever does not take up this cross cannot claim to be a follower of Jesus, for without a cross we cannot be His disciples. Without a cross there is no heaven when we physically die. Without our cross there is no hope of glory.

Our cross is a cross of obedience

When Jesus came to live and die on a cross for the sins of the world, He did so in obedience to God our Father. When He looked death in the face He said, "*Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.*"

Luke 22:42

Even knowing the personal cost and suffering required for our benefit resulted in Jesus obeyed the Father. Now when we read Jesus words in relationship with Him, we see He commands us to follow Him in obedience, even unto death on our cross. Without obedience there is no

heaven. If we fail to do as He commands we have chosen a different path that doesn't include heaven. Jesus doesn't ask us to die alone, no more than He was alone when He died for us. His commitment to the presence of the Father guaranteed He would do as the Father desired.

Obedience of the heart is unavoidable if we love Jesus. John the Baptist declared the need for obedience when he said, *'He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.'* John 3:36

One glorious day Jesus will return to separate the sheep from the goats; that is, those who have obeyed Him and those who please themselves. (Matt 25:32) *'Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.'* 2 Thess 1:7-8

We are to obey the whole Gospel. The gospel is not only the good news that Jesus died for our sins, but includes what we need of God's good news because of the bad news of our sinfulness. And it includes everything Jesus taught was necessary to gain the benefits of His death on our behalf.

Our cross is a cross of humility

Many people claim to be Christians but insist on their rights to please themselves, and for others to treat them agreeably. But the example of Jesus is something else entirely.

'Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.' Phil 2:6-9

If we have obeyed Jesus we have died to self, and the dead in Christ have no rights in the world.

The only right we have in the world is God's judgement, for we have all rebelled, all of us have disobeyed Him. We have all pleased ourselves in demanding our will be done in some way. Individually we have all been self centred, deceitful, demanding, dishonest, divisive, disloyal, angry,

unloving, impatient, unforgiving, ungrateful, and rebellious, both to those given us by God in authority, and to God Himself.

Demanding our rights is actually the indicator of wanting to control our world; it is what we want when we don't have God in control. When we don't accept God's control we take His place. If God is not in control we won't agree with God's standards so we set our own. Maintaining our control is a stressful business which hurts us and others. When we live under God's control we are to be living according to His nature; our control is based on self interest which makes self sacrifice for others obsolete.

Taking up our cross means we never grumble about the circumstances our Father is using to bring about our transformation. (Phil 2:12-14) Instead we ask Him what He is working in us that will result in all things resulting for our benefit in His kingdom.

Rom 8:28-29

Children grumble but without knowledge, but the mature have understanding. The cross bearers are to leave childish thinking behind. *'Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.'*

1 Cor 14:20

Our cross is a yoke of learning from Jesus

In taking up our cross, Jesus calls us to learn from Him and for Him. *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Matt 11:29-30

His yoke gives rest because He is the powerful one we are yoked too. The yoke couples two hearts into one purpose. The yoke ensures the weaker one will gain the strength of the stronger one. Taking up our cross in communion with Christ is the only way our sinful life can be put to death in order that we can live the resurrected life Jesus gives all who will obey Him. The strong man must do for the weak what he cannot do for himself by the governance of the Holy Spirit as we commit ourselves to being led by Him in all things.

Our cross is a light for the world

Our cross means we are set apart by God to be the light of the world as we follow Christ who is the Light. *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it*

under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”
Matt 5:14-16

True Light is the revelation of God’s truth burned deeply into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to those who have died to self. Seeing and hearing spiritually can be understood as hearing and gaining understanding directly from the Spirit, as a revelation of His truth, as understanding given by the Spirit.

But if we don’t see the darkness in the world because we don’t have God’s light, we will tend to fall back into its way of thinking and we won’t live in the light. If we don’t see the darkness and live in the light, we won’t remember who we are in Christ.

If we don’t see the darkness and live in the light we will have an identity crisis. If we don’t see the darkness we will stumble and fall. We will live in the shadows. We won’t be an affective witness to Christ. We won’t be free from the power of sin. We won’t walk in the Spirit. We won’t walk as He walked. We won’t see the desperate need of those in the darkness. We won’t see the danger of indifference. We won’t see the prince of darkness waiting close by. If we are not saved from the darkness we are not saved into the light. If we don’t walk in the light we won’t recognise others who are light bearers.

It is one thing to talk about the darkness, it’s another thing entirely to see the darkness everywhere and stay in the light. If we are ever to remain in the light we must do so by living by the power of our cross in the presence of Christ. No light, no sight. Many think they have light but fail to see where they are because of the darkness within. Only death on our cross ensures we walk in the light. Taking up our cross is our witness to the world that to be in Christ and go to heaven is we must die to self so He can live in us. Taking up the cross shows the world our willingness to die to self in order to live for the light of God. Furthermore taking up our cross shows the determination needed to die to self interest and the comfort of the world, so that we can live for the interests of God.

Our cross is a cross of proclaiming Christ

In taking up our cross Jesus tells us that what we hear from Him in secret we should proclaim to the world from rooftops. *“What I tell you in*

the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.” Matt 10:27

Because we are securely united with Christ we will witness to Him in all the world. *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”* Acts 1:8

What He teaches us who are living for Him He and gives of His power are free gifts, we are required to freely share this with the world. *“Freely you received, freely give.”* Matt 10:8

Our cross is a testimony that we follow Jesus the only Son of God who died for the sins of the world. Our cross is the evidence that we no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf. *‘For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.’* 2 Cor 5:14-15

And because we testify for Him before all men, He testifies for us before the Father. *“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.”* (Matt 10:32) The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy saying, *“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”* 2 Tim 1:8

Our cross is a cross of service

Jesus came from heaven to die on a cross for the sins of the world. He calls all those who want to enter heaven to follow His example and take up their own cross to die to self interest so that they can live for the interest of His Father, and have life and peace. In taking up His cross Jesus came to serve and not to be served. In taking up our cross we become the servants of all.

“Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Matt 23:10-12

“You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one

another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him."

John 13:13-16

'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'

Phil 2:5-8

Our cross is a cross of simple living

Jesus always showed a lack of concern for the world and the things of the world. He had few possessions as He walked around the land of His people. He had no house He could call His own to live in. He even said He had nowhere to lay His head. *"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

Matt 8:20

While Jesus may have had little of the material world to call His own, He was rich because He always had the Father. *"Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."*

John 16:32

The things of the world are not to entangle us so we fail to follow His example. The Apostle John gives us a warning about being entangled in the world of things. *'Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.'*

1 John 2:15

Our cross is a cross of suffering

The last thing we would naturally choose to do is suffer. But suffering is the way to holiness as we follow the example of Christ.

Jesus knew that His disciples would suffer *"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles."*

Matt 10:16-18

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Matt 10:34) “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.”

John 16:2

‘The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.’

Rom 8:17

‘For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.’ 1 Pet 2:21

Our cross means making disciples

Jesus calls us to take up our cross and go into the entire world to make disciples of all nations who will follow Jesus’ example, and take up their cross so they can walk as He walked.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matt 28:19-20

This is the real mission for all who follow Jesus. As He made disciples of us, He calls us to go and make disciples who will take up their cross to follow Him. Making disciples is not an option for the cross bearer, it is the reason we live.

Our cross is also an enduring joy

‘let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.’

Heb 12:1-2

The joy that awaited Jesus also awaits us who follow Him with our cross. *‘So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.’*

2 Co 4:16-18

Jesus promised we will suffer with Him; but He also promised His loving presence all the days of our lives. *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*
Matt 28:20

He said *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”*
John 15:10-11

Our cross gives us exclusive entry to heaven

This is why the cross is the only key to the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. Doing works for God won’t work. Knowing all theology about God won’t get us into heaven. Saying religious prayers won’t open the door. Knowing every creed and statement of faith will not be of any help if we want to live with God.

Only a cross will open the way to God because those who carry a cross follow Jesus and do the works of His Father. Only those who follow Jesus know Him and obey all He has commanded so that they are also known by Him.

If we are serious about following Jesus we must have a cross like His otherwise we will not know His heart. Jesus said *“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* (John 17:3) This knowledge doesn’t just know about the Father and Jesus, it is knowledge that only comes when we share daily intimacy with the heart of the Father and the Son by giving up our

God works His gift of repentance in us so that we are compelled to take up our cross daily which ensures the indwelling Spirit who will lead us and teach us all things that Christ requires of His brethren. The Spirit gives enabling ability to each cross bearer so that they are better equipped to serve the family of God’s Church, and take the testimony of Christ death and resurrection into the world so that others may be bought out of the darkness into the kingdom of light in Christ Jesus.

Without our cross we have no Spirit and therefore no salvation in Christ. For without Him we can do nothing, we are nothing concerning the kingdom of God. Our cross is the only key to the heavenly door.

If we chose to find our own way without a cross, we disobey Christ and reject Him as Lord which means He is not our Saviour.

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

Our Cross



Is our only Key to Heaven

Taking up our cross is the same as saying:

"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." Matt 6:33

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