

Never Get Over the Cross of Christ

The Cross for me is a reminder of who I am and Whose I am. The Christian faith is not a set of rules for successful living. It is no philosophy or self-help theory. It is a declaration of God's mighty acts in history, centering around a cross and an empty tomb. Isaac Watts' great hymn: "When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride." The entertainer Dale Evans, wife of Roy Rogers, is fond of saying, "I looked for my pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow but found it at the foot of the cross." The cross of Christ is the greatest the purest expression of love the world has ever known. When Jesus spoke of his pending crucifixion in Luke 9:22 He said, "The Son of Man MUST undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." Jesus was drawn toward the cross because it was his destiny. He was the only person in history born for the purpose of dying. John 3:16 proclaims, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." God built this world on a moral foundation. When God's moral laws are violated, somebody always pays for it. Since Jesus was the only sinless person in history, he alone was free from indictment for his own sin. Therefore, he was a worthy offering or sacrifice for the sins of all humanity past, present and future. As God in human form, he was great enough and good enough to be a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. Our salvation has been paid for in the shed blood of Jesus. Therefore, we can know forgiveness and a relationship with God. All this was done because God loves us. There is only one way that sinners like you and me can succeed at Eternity and that is to simply confess your sins and accept the good news that Jesus Christ died for you personally, to forgive and reconcile you to God.

Once we accept Christ as Lord and Savior we make him Lord and not just Savior of our lives by taking up our cross and following where Jesus leads. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." This does not mean to simply endure whatever is thrust upon us by what some people call fate or bad luck. A cross is an unforced, voluntary obligation. It means to offer some costly witness or ministry because our gratitude compels us. What compels us is gratitude and grace - not guilt. To be a Christian is to be dominated by gratitude and wonderfully obsessed by grace. If you ever really understand that Jesus' agony on the cross was for you personally, you can never get over it. You should NEVER get over it! You will spend the rest of your days trying to say thank you in appropriate ways. Garrison Keillor in one of his unique radio broadcasts talked about a Thanksgiving he experienced in rural Minnesota. The whole family gathered around this huge table, creaking under the weight of a turkey-centered feast. "Then", said Keillor, "someone made the mistake of calling on Uncle John to say the blessing. They should have known that Uncle John couldn't pray without talking about the cross and crying. Nothing makes the rest of us more uncomfortable than standing around listening to a grown man cry. We stared at the floor and shifted from one foot to another." Then Garrison Keillor added this incisive observation that cuts to the quick: "All of us knew that Jesus had died on the Cross, but Uncle John had never gotten over it." God forbid that any of us should ever get over it. I pray that you have allowed the Cross of Christ to transform your life as you receive the love God has for you. I pray that that loving sacrifice has motivated you to take up your cross and follow Jesus out of eternal gratitude. I close with the words to a beautiful song by Darlene Joyce Zschech titled, "Thank You for the Cross Lord". "Thank you for the cross, Lord, thank you for the price You paid, bearing all my sin and shame, in love You came and gave amazing grace. Thank you for this love, Lord, thank you for the nail pierced hands, you washed me in Your cleansing flow for now all I know is your forgiveness and embrace. Worthy is the Lamb, seated on the throne, Crown You now with many crowns, you reign victorious, High, and lifted up, Jesus Son of God, The Darling of Heaven crucified, Worthy is the Lamb, Worthy is the Lamb." Indeed, Worthy is the Lamb of God, Jesus, who on the cross meant for us, gave His life, and died our death so we could share in the victory of the resurrection. I pray you know this victory and know this peace.