

What is a Personal Cross? A Call to the Cross

As we approach Easter, we pause to remember the cross—what we call Good Friday. Hours before His death, Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper, commanding us to remember and proclaim His death until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26). Why is this so important?

Because it was on the cross that Jesus defeated Hell once and for all:

"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:15, NIV84)

In biblical times, a conquering king would parade his defeated enemy—stripped and chained—through the streets. Paul paints this image for us to grasp the magnitude of Christ's triumph on the cross. It wasn't just a moment of sacrifice—it was a moment of universal victory.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.
– Elvina M. Hall

The Call to Carry Your Cross

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "When Jesus calls a man, He bids him come and die." Jesus Himself said:

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matthew 16:24, NKJV)

Each of us is called to carry a cross—not the one Christ bore for our sins, but one crafted for our

transformation. It is personal—tailor-made by God Himself, just for you. It is precise. And it is purposeful.

As the old hymn says:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,

And all the world go free?

No, there's a cross for everyone, And there's a cross for me.

– Thomas Shepherd

What Does a Personal Cross Look Like?

The elements that surrounded Christ's crucifixion are often mirrored in our own journey of transformation. While we cannot die for the sins of the world, we are called to follow Jesus—through suffering, surrender, and on to resurrection.

You may experience some or all of the elements of a cross. With each, keep in mind that **Resurrection Morning is coming—with all of its glory**. What you're about to read may be difficult, but it is not without hope. My purpose in sharing these is to strengthen and encourage you: the cross may be painful, but it is powerfully transformative in our lives.

1. Betrayal by the Closest

"Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48)

Betrayal stings the most when it comes from those we love. Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss—in Gethsemane, a place of sacred friendship. You may experience a similar betrayal in a sacred place, by someone you trusted deeply.

2. Denial and Abandonment by Friends

"I do not know the man!" – Peter (Matthew 26:74)

“Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.” (Matthew 26:56)

There may come a time when those you thought would stand beside you disappear instead. Their silence may be louder than words.

3. Accusation and Injustice

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth...” (Isaiah 53:7)

Like Jesus, you may be falsely accused, misrepresented, or judged unfairly—often by people who should have known better.

4. Public Humiliation and Loss of Reputation

“They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him... they mocked Him.” (Matthew 27:28–31)

Your dignity, your name, and your standing may be torn down in public view. This too was part of Christ’s cross.

5. Forgotten Goodness

“He saved others,” they said, “but He can’t save Himself!” (Matthew 27:42)

Your faithfulness may be forgotten in the storm of accusation. Jesus healed even in the garden—yet they seized Him anyway. The crowd forgets quickly.

6. Deep Soul Suffering

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” (Matthew 26:38)

The cross always includes inner suffering—waves of grief, spiritual pressure, and the agony of walking a path no one else fully understands.

7. Exposure of What’s Hidden in You

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34)

Crisis brings what’s hidden to the surface. The cross will expose what still needs to die—resentment, pride, fear. But what is revealed can also be healed.

Over 30 years ago, I was ministering to a man who had gone through a deep betrayal. As we talked, he insisted that everything was fine. But when I mentioned the name of someone involved in the situation, he suddenly erupted in anger and bitterness. After a moment of silence, he looked at me and said, “I didn’t know that was in me.”

That moment revealed what the cross often does—it brings to light what has been buried. And God, in His mercy, gives us those moments not to shame us but to transform us. He has a way of squeezing the tube of toothpaste so we can see what comes out. What rises to the surface in crisis becomes an invitation to surrender it—and to let the cross do its work.

8. Darkness and Silence

“From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.” (Matthew 27:45)

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46)

At the cross, the sky went dark. It began to rain. The earth shook. Jesus cried out in anguish.

You may face seasons where Heaven feels silent and the light disappears. This too is the cross.

Have You Been to Gethsemane?

Before the cross, there was Gethsemane—a name that means “olive press.” It was the place where pressure was applied to produce oil—used for anointing, for healing, and for consecration. In that garden, Jesus was anointed with sorrow before He was crowned with glory.

It was there He sweat blood and surrendered completely to the Father’s will:

“Not My will, but Yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

****Gethsemane is where the crushing happens before the calling is fulfilled.****

Every cross either has—or should have—a Gethsemane moment. If you skipped Gethsemane, it's not too late to go back. Gethsemane prepares us to deal correctly with our own personal cross. You know you've been there when you no longer rehearse the names of those who contributed to your cross.

It is still the place where the will is laid down and the anointing flows.

Resurrection Comes After Crucifixion

“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!”
(Matthew 27:40)

That's what the enemy wanted. But if Jesus had come down, redemption would've died. He stayed. He endured. He won.

Think of the thief beside Him. Had he escaped his cross, he likely would've stayed bitter. But by embracing it—and turning to Jesus—he found eternal life.

Let the Cross Finish Its Work

If you let it, the cross will change you. It will hurt, but it will also heal. And when it's finished, the places you were pierced will carry resurrection glory.

You'll stop rehearsing who hurt you. You'll stop naming Judas, Pilate, and Peter. Gethsemane already dealt with that.

So if you haven't been to your personal Gethsemane—**go**.
If you're hanging on your cross—**stay**.
Because resurrection power is coming.
And Sunday is not far off.

Pastor Steve Coder
Hand to the Plow Outpost
Sarasota, FL

A Couple Notes from the Executive Director

- We were so blessed to have Pastor Steve write this month's newsletter. If you were encouraged, helped, strengthened, or more by this writing, please let Pastor Steve know by sending him a note to: Pastor Steve Coder, 16221 Rawls Rd, Sarasota, FL 34240-9147.
- Fellowship Youth Camp is July 13-19 at Lincoln State Park in southern Indiana. The Holy Spirit has already been speaking about this year's theme and whispering of great things! If you would like to register a camper or get more information, please click the button below or email fyc@foundministry.org.
- If you would like to support a camper going by paying their way, navigate to foundministry.org/give and select Fellowship Youth Camp from the dropdown menu. Additionally, feel free to send a check to P.O. Box 482, Parker City, IN 47368 and include Fellowship Youth Camp on the memo line.
- Reminder: We will no longer be sending paper copies of the newsletter, except once a quarter. We *will* continue publishing them as the Lord leads, but they will only be emailed and posted online for download as a PDF. Head on over to foundministry.org/newsletter and scroll down to explore all your options.
- Some of you may have seen the previous email we've sent or the social media posts, but in case you missed it we wanted to make sure you know about the RFOD Newsletter Archive. Every newsletter we had (we believe we got them all) from 1962-2000 have been digitized and are available as free downloads at foundministry.org/newsletter so please enjoy!
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