

## The Significance of the Cross

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We have studied and discussed the cross for several months now. So, I would like to share some of what I have learned from Scott, my studies and our discussions, and hopefully, show the need to better understanding it too. Jesus indicated that the cross was important, as can be see by some of his statements: **Lk 14:27:** *...whosoever doth not bear [take up, put upon self] his cross, and come [follow] after me, cannot [not able to] be my disciple.* **Mt 10:38:** *...he that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is (absolutely) not worthy of me.* [expanded Greek] (technical language)

There are two very important things to note in these verses: IF, I do not take up the cross 1) I am absolutely not able to be Jesus' disciple; 2) I am absolutely not worthy of him. With these two verses, the significance of the cross becomes immediately apparent. The next couple of questions, then, is what does it mean to take up the cross, and how do I take it up?

What does it mean to take up the cross: **Mt 16:24-25:** *24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.* From Thayer, the more basic meaning of the Greek word (Strong's 533) translated *deny* is "lose sight of one's self." To lose sight of self is the shifting the mental focus from self to the example Jesus has set before me. It is losing my earthly life (spiritually) and finding eternal life (quality of the heavenly) in Christ. This Greek word (533) appears in 13 texts, most of them associated with Peter's denial of Jesus. When the soldier's came for Jesus in the garden, Peter's focus shifted from Jesus to himself. In those few moments of time Peter became a type of those who seek to save their life and lose it by denying Christ. I have done this myself, when I received a very strong "don't do it", and I went ahead and did it. Like Peter, I repented, but looking back I can see the lingering effects and the setback in spiritual growth.

How do I take up the cross? James said that friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jam 4:4), and Paul said: **Gal 6:14:** *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16) - This is the enmity, or hostility toward God. The enmity, lust and pride are inward things based in our iniquity. **Job 15:5:** *For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty.* (Revised Standard). Words of the crafty come from crooked, twisted thinking about God, which corruption begins in the womb (Ps 51:5), and is taught us by familiar spirits - mother, father, pastor and friends. The heavens (God's way of thinking - Isa 55:7-9) reveal the iniquity (Job 20:27), and it is by kindness (KJ = mercy) and truth that it is purged (Pr 16:6).

Jesus is the truth, and it is because of the Father's mercy that he went to the cross to manifest God's love. Therefore, to take up the cross is to seek God's understanding (from the heavens) of why He would choose this method of salvation, and why the Son would give his life for me. So, when I look at the cross through earthly eyes I see the Son of God whose hands and feet are nailed to a piece of wood; he is naked, bruised and beaten, and a crown of thorns on his head. But when I consider the spiritual meaning of this scene, I see my human nature (wood), my spiritual nakedness and how I have, because of my twisted understanding of God, made the Son like unto me (nailed to cross). The crown of thorns is a symbol of my cares for the world, its ways and its mind-set (cf Mk 4:7, 18-19). God saw before the foundation of the world, the wounds we would carry, and how they would govern our actions, and affect how we treat others. This is

what Jesus came to heal.

The quality of life for which we seek is defined by John: **1 Jn 3:14-16:** *14. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* (Revised Standard) The life we lose is the death out of which we pass when we consider the death and resurrection of Christ and how it reveals the power of God's love to us and in us. The two great commands on which all the law is based is revealed by the cross, and therefore, we need to look at and study the events daily. This is how we take up the cross. By considering the life of Christ daily, the love of God grows in our hearts - to the point we lose our desire to do anything displeasing to our heavenly Father. His love fills the desires of the heart.

**Brotherly love:** **Eph 2:11-16:** *11. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; 16. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

Paul is discussing the actual division that existed between Jew and Gentile in his day. The 'law of commandments contained in ordinances' was, in Paul's day, the Jew's interpretation of how to keep the law (covered in the Col 2:14 study). The concept of this division still exists today in principle, and is seen in the division of the various religious organizations, and even within each group, because of their disagreements over interpretation of the law of God. Applied inwardly, the division is caused by the conflict of what God is teaching us, which comes against what we have concocted ourselves, or learned from others. This division, caused by the enmity of the heart, keeps us from loving others the same as self. However, coming to an understanding of why the cross, does away with this enmity as defined in Romans:

**Rom 8:5-7:** *5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The emotional development of a person is 80% complete by age 8, and 95% complete by age 18. Our emotional make up carries many scars from the wounds received, and it shapes our thinking about God and how we treat others. This way of thinking is summarized in scripture as 'the old man.' **Rom 6:5-6:** *5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6. Knowing this, that our old man (the old, earthly way of thinking) is crucified with him, that the body of [the sin nature] might be [inactivated], that henceforth we should not serve sin.* (explanation) [actual meaning of Greek]

**1 Jn 4:7-11:** *7. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. 8. He who does not love, does not know God; for God is love. 9. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son [as an act of mercy concerning] our*

*sins. 11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* (Revised Standard) [literal Greek]  
Remember - the cross not only is a figure of my wounds, but also my neighbor's wounds. Let God's love grow in the heart! Amen!