

# The Way of the Cross

The cross is at the heart of Christianity. It is not only the means of the sinner's salvation; it is the pattern for the disciple's conduct. "The Way", as early disciples described Christianity, was the way of the cross. Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Lk 9:23). The cross is a pattern for every role that the believer fulfills.

**The husband's cross.** "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). The believing husband has a sacrificial love for his wife. Christ gave himself for unworthy sinners. The husband loves and gives himself even when he fancies his wife unlovable.

**The wife's cross.** "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything" (Eph 5:24). Our tendency after reading this verse is to begin naming the exceptions—the times a wife doesn't have to be subject to her husband. Perhaps we should learn the rule before we concern ourselves with the exceptions to it.

**The worker's cross.** "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable... But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 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). Christians ought to be the most coveted employees in the workplace—the most responsible, efficient, hardworking, on-time, quality-conscious and ethical workers around. They may experience difficulty when their Christian ethics conflict with the "business ethics" of the workplace. In doing your job, or making a stand, remember the cross.

**The cross of the unjustly treated.** "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God (1 Pet 3:18). God wills that His people hurt some for doing what is right. It's a practical means of testing our faith and character. It's His tool for declaring to the world that the Christian has a hope worth hurting for.

**The brother's cross.** "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction (Col 1:24). Christians suffer for Christians. There are burdens to be born for the brethren—in tolerating immaturity, in forgiving faults, in overlooking slights, in not reciprocating wrongs, in helping weaknesses, in praying for needs. Before you ask what your brethren have done for you lately, first ask what you have done for them.

Note this important principle in all cross-bearing. We don't bear crosses for others because others bear them for us. Jesus is the only reason, the sole motivation, for the cross we bear. He bore His cross when nobody understood, when nobody saw the purpose. His demeanor beneath His cross is the pattern for our own behavior. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps."

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