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A Journey of Faith

*Then Jesus said to his disciples,
"Whoever wants to be my disciple must
deny themselves and take up
their cross and follow me."
Matthew 16:24*



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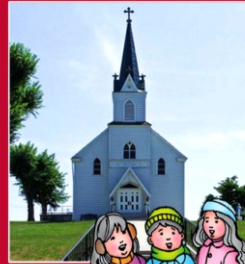


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A Journey of Faith contents

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Editorial Rev. Vijayesh Lal04	Come And Die Mr. Chacko Thomas 18
Must Jesus Bear The Cross Alone Rev. Dr. David Mende07	The Crucified Life (Part I) Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy23
A Political Party Or A Political Combine Is Not Our Savior Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj14	Relections On The Cross Dr. Shantanu Dutta30
	Prayer37

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Editorial 



Rev. Vijayesh Lal

The Cross at the Centre

In an age of escalating polarization, where rhetoric is increasingly strident and divisions ever more entrenched, the church must hold fast to the eternal truth of the cross as its guiding light. For the cross of Christ is not merely a historical event or symbolic artifact – it is the defining reality of the Christian faith, the very crux upon which our beliefs and witness hinge.

Too often in today's secular age, the profound significance of the cross has been diminished or misconstrued. To some, it is seen as an antiquated relic, a violent and off-putting symbol incompatible with modern sensibilities. Others reduce it to a vague metaphor for suffering or self-sacrifice, stripped of its

unique salvific power. But for those with eyes to see, the cross remains the inescapable foundation of our faith, the means by which God's unfathomable love and perfect holiness intersected to offer redemption to a fallen world.

The cross was no tragic accident or mere historical happenstance. It was, as the Apostle Peter proclaimed, part of "God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23). A purposeful act foreseen from before the foundation of the world, whereby the sinless Son of God would take upon Himself the penalty for our transgressions. In his agonizing death upon that rugged beam, Christ paid the full price for sin, satisfying the demands of divine justice while

simultaneously revealing the incomprehensible depths of divine mercy.

This sacrificial act was not some abstract, impersonal atonement but an intensely personal exchange – His life for ours, His suffering for our redemption. "Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross, not just for the sins of others, but for your sins?" As the church elders rightly emphasized, grasping the personal nature of Christ's work on the cross is essential for salvation. It is the nexus point where God's love and holiness converge, the only means by which we finite, fallen creatures can be reconciled to the eternal, holy Creator.

Yet the cross is not merely the gateway to salvation – it is the pattern for Christian life and witness. To take up our cross daily is to consciously embrace the way of selfless sacrifice and death to self as exemplified by Christ. It is to radically reorient our perception of love, replacing the shallow counterfeits peddled by the secular world with the self-giving, holy love modelled at Calvary. As we are conformed to the image of the Crucified, we become living parables of the

gospel, demonstrations of its transformative power in the midst of a broken, polarized culture.

For it is this brokenness that the church must directly confront, serving as an agent of reconciliation and a beacon of peace. In a world fragmented by strife, enmity, dissension and creeping idolatry, the church cannot simply mirror the polarizing forces at work. We must be set apart, reflecting the "fruits of the Spirit" – love, peace, gentleness, self-control. This is no mere call to passive acquiescence or compromise, but a summons to courageous and prophetic witness rooted in the very character of the Triune God.

Our political and cultural divisions run far deeper than mere ideological disagreements. They are fundamentally spiritual conflicts, warfare "against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). The church must cultivate discernment, seeing beyond the surface-level rhetoric and partisan posturing to the nefarious forces arrayed against the truth. For the Evil One is always at work, perverting even

the words of Scripture to sow discord and division among Christ's followers.

In such an environment, the cross stands as our steadfast mooring, our constant point of reorientation. For in its shadow, all our petty disagreements shrink in significance when set against the overwhelming reality of what Christ accomplished on our behalf. It was on the cross that Jesus definitively defeated the principalities and powers arrayed against Him, triumphing over sin, death, hell, and Satan through His atoning sacrifice. And He calls His followers to share in that victory - not through intimidation, violence, or partisan manoeuvring, but through the upside-down wisdom and "weakness" of the cross.

This is the counterintuitive, countercultural way of the cross – the path of humility, service and enemy-love that secured the ultimate triumph over hatred, division and evil itself. It is the way of self-emptying and surrender that paradoxically unleashes the explosive power of the gospel into darkened hearts and broken circumstances. For it was in His apparent defeat that Christ

achieved the decisive victory.

In an age of escalating conflict and hostility, that is the clarion call to the church. Not the way of partisan fighting or glorifying any political agenda, but the way of the cross – the sacrificial path of Christlike love, holiness and reconciliation. For at the end of the day, our civic allegiances are fleeting, but the eternal truth of the cross remains, beckoning us to lose our lives in order to save them, to die so that we might truly live. As Romanian Orthodox priest-monk Fr. Arsenie Boca declared, "He who makes the sign of the cross, must also be prepared to carry his cross."

So let the church hold high the symbol of the cross. But more than that, let us incarnate its reality through lives of courageous peace-making and sacrificial witness. For in doing so, we most accurately reflect the One who disarmed the powers and authorities through the cross, making "peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:20). Only when the church is defined by the cross can we hope to make an enduring difference in our fractured, polarized world.

Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Introduction

When the movie, "The Passion of the Christ" directed by Mel Gibson was released in 2004, many people thought that this movie would end his career. Since the characters in the movie speak only Aramaic, Hebrew, and Latin with English subtitles, many believed that people will not show interest in this movie. However, when the film was released, it became a huge success. It accumulated over \$600m (60 crore dollars) all over the world! This movie was criticized for its "graphic violence." When we watch some Christian movies, they show a very sanitized picture of Christ's sufferings. But after

this movie, many people began to comprehend the sufferings that Christ endured on the cross.

Yet, even the graphic portrayal of Jesus' sufferings in the movie doesn't fully show what he suffered for us. Mark 15:21-32 records Christ's crucifixion. In this passage, we see that Jesus was crucified along with the robbers and he was derided and reviled. In his Gospel, Mark doesn't emphasize the horrors of the cross that Jesus had to endure. That's because his audience knew how painful and shameful its punishment was. Instead, Mark focuses on the truths which were ironically expressed as Jesus was mocked. But since

most of us may not be familiar with the horrors of crucifixion, I'll attempt to explain what the Son of God endured for us. Jesus went through one of the most brutal forms of death that humans have known. Come with me to Golgotha and see how much our precious Lord suffered for us on the cross.

1. Jesus is led out of the praetorium to Golgotha (Mark 15:21-22).

Mark 15:20 says that the soldiers led Jesus out to crucify him. Then, Mark tells that the Roman soldiers "compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country" (Mk 15:21). Cyrene is in North Africa and it had a large Jewish population. Simon was probably a man of color. Probably, he was on his way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He was "compelled" to carry the cross as the Romans who occupied Israel during this time had the authority to force ordinary citizens to carry their baggage (cf. Mt. 5:41). Some scholars say that the journey to the site of crucifixion was only about 328 yards (300 meters). Others say it was about 600 meters. Still, the soldiers had to

compel Simon to carry the cross probably because Jesus was too exhausted and too weak to carry it. We can't even imagine the pain that the rough and heavy cross caused as it pressed against the mangled skin of Jesus' shoulders. Some say that the crossbar was about 13-18 kilograms, which had to be carried to the place of crucifixion. Others say that it could have been around 45 kilograms.

Eventually, "they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull)" (Mk 15:22). Both the Jews and Romans executed the victims outside the city limits (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35-36; Heb. 13:12). This place got the name "Golgotha" or "Place of a Skull" probably because it was the site of many executions. The name, Calvary is derived from "calva," which is the Latin word for skull. But nowhere does the New Testament mention that Golgotha was a hill (cf. the popular song, "On a hill far away.") The archaeological excavations inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem support that the location of Jesus' crucifixion is located within this church. In Mark 8:34, the mark of

a true disciple is to take up his cross and follow Jesus. In a sense, Simon of Cyrene was the first person to literally fulfill that command. We are also called to take up our cross and follow Jesus. I'll talk more about this later.

2. Jesus is Crucified (Mark 15:23-25).

Mark goes on to record: "And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it" (Mk 15:23). Someone offered Jesus wine which was mixed with myrrh. This was prophesied in Psalm 69:21. Jesus was offered this so in order to lessen his pain. Probably, some who empathized with Jesus offered it to him (cf. Prov. 31:6). However, in Mark 14:25 Jesus makes a vow at the Passover meal that he will not drink of the fruit of the vine until he comes in his kingdom. So, Jesus refuses the drink. Jesus chose to experience the awful sufferings of the crucifixion in a conscious state. He was fully resolved to drink the cup of suffering that was given to him.

Now let me dwell on that brief phrase that Mark uses in 15:24:

"And they crucified him." As I mentioned earlier, Mark doesn't explain much about the crucifixion because his readers knew how awful this form of punishment was. Marcus Tullius Cicero, a Roman statesman, orator, lawyer, and philosopher said that the crucifixion is the "most cruel and horrifying punishment." Today, we wear crosses around our necks and use them as a decorative piece in our churches and homes. But originally, the cross was a symbol of death, torture, and shame. Cicero wrote, "Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears."

Dictators often cruelly punish their opponents in order to strike terror in their hearts. For instance, ISIS makes videos of beheadings and circulates them on the internet to spread terror and to recruit more misguided youth to join their terror organization. When the Romans crucified the guilty, they would do so on frequently traveled roads where most people could see its horrors. Crucifixion served as a strong deterrent to others. This form of

punishment was meted out only to the non-Roman citizens. Many of the slaves, violent criminals, and prisoners of war were treated cruelly and killed. Moreover, the victims were shamed by crucifying them naked on a frequently traveled road, where most people could see the spectacle (Heb. 12:2).

But since the Jews opposed such obscenity, the Romans probably allowed a loincloth on Jesus. However, we can't be very sure as some scholars argue that Jesus was crucified naked. The victim's hands were stretched and pinned to a horizontal crossbeam (Latin for crossbeam: *patibulum*) through nails or ropes. In Jesus' case, nails were driven through his wrists (not palms). The victim had to carry this crossbeam, not the entire cross to the place of execution. Then, this horizontal crossbeam was attached to a vertical stake, which was generally fixed permanently at the site of execution.

Similarly, the feet were placed with one above the other or supported on a footrest and nailed to the vertical beam. The victim was allowed to be seated

on a small support to prevent early death. Death didn't come easily for the victims of crucifixion. If the flogging was not so severe, some would even survive for several days. Generally, death didn't come from blood loss. Rather, according to James Edwards, victims' deaths came "from hypovolemic (decrease in the volume of blood circulation) shock or exhaustion asphyxia (insufficient oxygen) or heart failure, or a combination of the above." Those who were crucified went through excruciating pain, died a slow death, and were degraded publicly. That's why Pilate was surprised when he came to know that Jesus had died so soon (Mk 15:44).

The victims couldn't chase away flies, birds, or animals from their wounds. The birds and animals feasted on the victim while he was still alive. Crosses were often low enough for dogs to eat the feet of those who hung on it. The low height also gave the opportunity for people to observe the victim from close quarters and to mock the victim. Those who hung on the cross couldn't protect themselves from heat or

cold. No wonder that the idea that Christ would die on the cross was "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). It was utterly scandalous! God chose the despicable cross to offer salvation to humankind!

Christ's sufferings recall David's sufferings mentioned in Psalm 22:18. In those days, the soldiers who executed a criminal had the rights over his minor possessions. So, they cast lots to decide what each should take. Mark says that Jesus was crucified about the third hour (Mk 15:25). But John 19:14 says that Jesus was crucified about the sixth hour. In those days, people didn't keep precise time. So, some scholars suggest that Jesus could have been crucified somewhere between 9:30 am to 10 am.

3. Jesus is derided and reviled (Mark 15:26-32).

Mark tells us that "the inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews'" (Mk 15:26). Sometimes, the victim's crime was stated on a placard that was placed on the cross, above the head. Jesus was

indeed the King of the Jews, but the Jews and the Romans didn't recognize it. In verse 27, the Greek word for robbers is *lesteis*, which can also mean "rebels." Probably, they were involved in the uprising along with Barabbas (cf. Mark 15:7). Jesus is crucified between those who rebelled against Rome. This is probably an allusion to Isaiah 53:12, where it says that the servant of the Lord is numbered with the transgressors. Unlike the two "robbers," Jesus refused to rebel against Rome (Mk 12:12-17). The phrase "one on his right and one on his left" ironically echoes the request of James and John (Mk 10:37).

Some began deriding Jesus: "And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days'" (Mk 15:29). As I mentioned earlier, the victims were deliberately crucified in a public place where most people could see. Since it was Passover, many people passed by the place of Jesus' crucifixion. These people derided (Greek: *blasphemeo*) him. They blasphemed against the Son of

God thereby committing the sin for which Jesus was condemned (Mk 14:64)! The mention of passersby wagging their heads is an allusion to Psalm 22:7-8.

They even accuse Jesus of claiming to destroy the temple. The same accusation was presented before the Sanhedrin (Mk 14:57-58). The passersby mock Jesus and say, "save yourself, and come down from the cross" (Mk 15:30)!" Jesus' refusal to save himself saved us from our sins (Mk 10:45)! Hallelujah!

Now the chief priests and the scribes join the others in mocking Jesus (vv. 31-32). They say that they would believe if Jesus came down from the cross. As in Mark 8:11-13, the demand for a sign is evidence of their unbelief. Our faith must not depend on sight. Rather, our faith must depend on the person of Christ. Ironically, they declare that "he saved others." They further say that "he cannot save himself." Jesus can obviously save himself. But in order for us to be saved, "he cannot save himself."

The robbers or rebels "who were

crucified him also reviled him" (v. 32). Luke records that later, one of the robbers repented and trusted in Jesus (Lk. 23:39-43). The derision and revilement, in essence, is the same temptation that Jesus faced in Gethsemane: the temptation to avoid "the cup." But Jesus had already faced that battle at Gethsemane and now he was voluntarily dying on the cross for the sins of humankind.

Conclusion

The lyrics of an old song go like this:

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.

Must Jesus bear the cross alone?

Yes, in one sense, Jesus alone could bear the cross and forgive our sins. However, in Mark 8:34, Jesus commands us to take up our cross: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

So, the Lord's message for us during this Lent season is: **We must carry our cross and follow Jesus because he refused to save himself and saved us.**

But what does it mean to carry your cross? Some think that carrying the cross means carrying a burden in their lives: sickness, family problems, financial problems, etc. But that's not the biblical meaning. Rather, it means that we must deny ourselves. We must die to self-will. To take up the cross means to make a total and radical commitment to do God's will, no matter what the cost. To take up the cross means that you're ready to be shamed for the cause of Christ. To take up the cross means to die to sin and the ways of the world. To take up our cross means that we are willing to suffer for Christ and if need be, we must be willing to even die for Christ. Jesus carried a cross to save you. Don't hesitate to carry your cross. As you live in this world, carry your cross and follow Jesus!

P.S. This article is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, *The Passion of Christ: Expository Sermons on Mark 14-16*. You may contact him for copies of this book.



Rev. Dr. David Mende

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Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life,
prosperity and honor.
Proverbs 21:21

A POLITICAL PARTY OR A POLITICAL COMBINE IS NOT OUR SAVIOR!

Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj



It is quite common to think this way when we pray for an upcoming Political election: "This particular party or combine which stands for secularism should come to power at all costs!" But we must not for a moment forget this: Our Savior remains our Lord! Our Savior is not a political party or a combine! The Bible repeatedly underlines this, via various lines of argument.

First, the Bible tells us plainly that we have only one Savior.

Consider the words of the Prophet Isaiah: 'I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior' (Isa. 43:11). Again, Isaiah pens: 'there is no God

apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me' (Isa. 45:21). Consider the words of Jesus – it could be any more clearer: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). The Apostles also taught the same. Peter said, ""And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Second, even though God used human instruments such as Moses to give Israel 'salvation' from Egypt, the Bible repeatedly attributes that to Yahweh alone. Even before the Exodus event

(the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage) happened, in the book of Genesis, God is presented as the future-rescuer of Israel from Egypt, even before Israel even entered Egypt (see Gen. 46:4). Hear the inspired words of Moses: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery' (Ex. 20:2-3). Moses repeated this when the people of Israel were about to cross over to the Promise Land without him (Dt. 5:6-7). Even in the Book of Exodus, the Bible uses the phrase or it's equivalent, "I the Lord who brought you out of Egypt" repeatedly (See Ex. 6:6; Ex. 6:7, Ex. 13:3, Ex. 29:46, Ex. 32:7, Ex. 32:11, Ex. 32:12). The Book of Leviticus carries forward the same name for Yahweh (Lev. 11:45; Lev. 19:36; Lev. 22:33; Lev. 22:43; Lev. 25:38; Lev. 25:42; Lev. 25:55; Lev. 26:13; Lev. 26:45). The Book of Numbers does so as well (Num. 14:13; Num. 15:41; Num. 20:16; Num. 23:22; Num. 24:8). The Book of Deuteronomy also repeated this name for God: the God who brought the people of Israel out from Egyptian bondage (Dt. 1:27; Dt. 4:20; Dt.

4:37; Dt. 5:6; Dt. 5:15; Dt. 6:12; Dt. 6:21; Dt. 7:8; Dt. 7:19; Dt. 8:14; Dt. 9:26; Dt. 13:5; Dt. 13:10; Dt. 16:1; Dt. 20:1; Dt. 26:8; Dt. 29:25). The God who got Israel out of Egypt – this theme is the theme of two verses in the book of Joshua (Josh. 24:5; 24:17). The book of Judges mentions the same thing about God, thrice (Jud. 2:1; Jud. 2:12; Jud. 6:8). In I Samuel 10:18 we read: 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' I Samuel 12:6, I Samuel 12:8 and 2 Samuel 7:6 presents God as the Egypt-deliver of Israel. This repeated name for God is not skipped in 1 Kings and 2 Kings (check out I Kings 8:16, I Kings 8:21, I Kings 8:51, I Kings 8:53, I Kings 9:9, 2 Kings 17:7 and 2 Kings 17:36). Many of the Psalms were written long after the Exodus, including the post-exilic period. God is presented as the Exodus-orchestrator in Psalm 81:10, Psalm 105:37 and Psalm 136:11. The Prophet Jeremiah again underlines this name for God in several places (Jer. 2:6, Jer. 7:22, Jer. 11:4, Jer. 11:7, Jer.

16:14, Jer. 16:15, Jer. 27:7-8, Jer. 31:32, Jer. 32:21, Jer. 34:13). Prophet Amos underscores the same name for God in three places (Amos 2:10, Amos 3:1, Amos 9:7). Listen to Prophet Micah's words: "Indeed, I brought you up from the land of Egypt; And ransomed you from the house of slavery; And I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam" (Micah 6:4). When I read the words of Prophet Hosea in Hosea 11:1, I get emotional: 'When Israel was a youth I loved him; And out of Egypt I called My son' (which Matthew alludes to in Matt. 2:15). Around 75 times, the Bible presents God as the One who rescued his children from Egyptian bondage when we consider Genesis-Revelation data! This is one of the most emphasised truths of the whole Bible! In the commonly-witnessed scenario of a political party or entity terrorizing the Christians in India, we must look to the Lord alone for rescue! We must not look to another political party for deliverance in such circumstances! This is the lesson I learn from repeated mention of

God the ultimate rescuer of Israel from Egyptian terrorism!

Third, the Bible proclaims that, one day, after the Second Coming of Jesus, an everlasting kingdom will be set-up by the Lord – not a political party. When Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven in glory, he will establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed – we can understand from Daniel's words in Daniel 7:13-14. To be a part of that eternal Kingdom, we must be holy people of the Most High, the Prophet scripts (Dan. 7:18). Of course, that holiness is gifted to us because of the Work of Jesus on the Cross. But we must guard that holiness enabled by His grace, as well. The writer to the Hebrews pens: 'Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God' (Heb. 11:10, NLT). To think that a particular political party or combine can give us 'an enduring city' is foolhardy as the same writer says: 'For here, we do not have an enduring city, but we are

looking for the city that is to come' (Heb. 13:14). When we place our expectation of a better country only on the Lord, He is not ashamed to be called our God – so says Hebrews 11:16.



Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

is the founder of Grabbing the Google Generation from Gehenna Mission, the G4 Mission; He is an itinerant Bible Teacher/Evangelist who has ministered in 20 different Indian states and in 7 countries with the organisers sending him the tickets! He is the author of three books, including, Straight Talk, a book that brings frank Bible teaching wrapped around contemporary events on sex, love, marriage, porn, phone-addiction, etc. He is currently writing his fourth book, Hyper-Biblical, a treatise against three modern false teachings: Hyper-Grace ('Since God always sees Jesus who is perfect, sin in your personal life does not matter'), Hyper-Supernaturalism ('Healing always God's Will and must happen now; no death for believers') and Hyper-Love ('you stop existing once you land in hell; all will be saved eventually as God is a God of love')

So, does this mean we should not bother about the upcoming National General elections? Far from it! We must go out vote with our hands with a prayer in our hearts! Romans 13:4 says this: 'For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.' Choose a candidate, a party which you think would be the faithful agents of God's wrath bringing punishment to the wrongdoer. Wrongdoers such as child-rapists, those who strip women and parade them in public, those who loot public money and escape to other nations, those who accept bribes and twist justice, etc. May God give us wisdom!

"No one should seek their own good, but the good of others."

1 Corinthians 10:24

COME AND DIE, The Master Calls

Mr. Chacko Thomas



Here are a few quotations before I lose you

"Abraham learned something of the cross when asked to sacrifice his son. He also knew the joy that comes because of the provision of a substitute (Genesis 22:1-13)." G. Arthur Keough

"Our 'cross' is not an irritable husband or a cantankerous wife. It is instead the symbol of death to the self." John Stott

"Leadership is a cross." George Verwer

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Jesus (see Mark 8:34, Luke

14:27, Matthew 16:24, 10:38)

THE CROSS as the CHRISTIAN SYMBOL

My friend, Ron Penny (Bangalore), tells me that during a Hindu-Muslim riot in Calcutta, "everyone", including Hindus and Muslims were wearing large crosses on them to avoid being killed.

I was raised in a tradition where we did not wear a cross around our necks or make a sign of the cross when approaching God. Nor were our places of worship marked by the Christian symbol, the cross. Tens of thousands of churches in our country do not display a cross on their building.

Some would regard it as idolatry. Of course we humans can turn anything into an idol, including self. It is amusing to me that some Christians would not wear gold but can have huge bank accounts and large estates.

Looking back at my tradition in the light of a Christian witness to more than a billion Indians, I think this is a lost opportunity. The symbol of a Cross could have been a great talking point with non-Christians. I still don't wear a cross, perhaps I should. I have looked at a few but haven't found one that I might like to wear. Hopefully, I would one day find a simple cross that speaks of the Saviour – rather than a big one that calls attention to itself.

These days, here in London, I notice that Muslims and Hindus are making themselves known by wearing their distinct religious outfits and marks, thus making a statement of who they are and who they are not. Maybe Christians should volunteer to become visibly Christian as well as on the inside.

George Verwer was famous for

his global jackets and other global clothing, including socks and, I am told, underwear.

A LARGE WOODEN CROSS ON THE MOVE:

A great Evangelist, Arthur Blessitt, entered the *Guinness World Records* for carrying a 12' by 6' wooden cross "around the world". The first cross he carried from Los Angeles to Washington, DC weighed 110 pounds.

Arthur started walking with a twelve-foot cross on December 25, 1969, and successfully carried a large wooden cross into every nation and major island group of the world. And in the process, he brought thousands to the Lord in large and small Gospel meetings -- many of them from other faiths and standing, including actors, politicians, and sports icons.

"Around five 'o clock one morning, I knelt by my bed and prayed. I was twenty-eight years old and would soon be twenty-nine. Suddenly Jesus spoke to me, not in an audible voice, but in my heart and mind. He said: I want you to take the cross that is

hanging on the wall in 'His Place' and carry it across America. ..." writes Blessitt in his book, **The CROSS** (subtitled: *38,102 Miles, 38 Years, 1 Mission*).

"As I journey around the world", writes, Blessitt, "I find the cross to be a universal symbol of God's love that can be understood in spite of language and cultural barriers." As a result of carrying a cross for so long, his body shape has been effected.

"Perhaps I'm the only person in history who has been physically shaped by the weight of a cross. But the changes the cross has brought to my physical body are not important. What is important is how the cross has changed my life, and the lives of so many others, from the inside out." What a testimony!!!

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME!

I was 17 when I first heard these words of Jesus: "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). It was in a sermon preached by

George Verwer in the context of World Evangelisation. It was more like Winston Churchill's call during the World War II: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat."

Thousands in the West and East took up George's challenge, for which we are glad. The book **True Discipleship** by William MacDonald was one of the required readings. We never objected. I fear that the churches expect too little of Christians these days. We must rise above it to the call of Jesus (Hebrews 10:24-25, 12:1-3).

I never thought that I would live to see the day when a whole book, 240 pages long, would be written on Matthew 16:24. Well, I have the book entitled **What If Jesus meant what He said** by Nate Bramsen, an American MK from Senegal. The 27 chapters of this book come in four parts found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:24: 1) If any man would come after Me, 2) Let Him deny Himself, 3) And take up his cross, 4) And Follow Me.

Thankfully, the message of the

book is not hard, bitter, and dangerous as the title sounds. It is an invitation to walk with Jesus in a love relationship that will endure throughout eternity. It reminds me of the song: "All I have to offer Him was brokenness and strife, but he made something beautiful of my life". Our taking up the cross is a response to His love. But it is the cross, nevertheless.

Writes Nate: "There is a difference between suffering because of a 'storm' in your life and suffering because of the cross you carry. ... In this broken world, both lost sinners and Christ-followers will be hit by storms. Things like cancer, unemployment, or death of a loved one are storms of life, they can happen to anyone. So, what distinguishes a storm from a cross?

"... The cross itself is the acceptance of being associated with Jesus Christ and bearing the shame associated with His name. Being rejected in the social arena because you refuse to compromise on the altar of culture. Being considered foolish

by your friends as you value the eternal over the tangible." (P l e a s e c h e c k : www.rockintl.org/resources for a free offer of resources for ministry.)

LIVING UNDER THE CROSS:

THE CROSS OF CHRIST is the title of a comprehensive study of the Cross by Rev. John Stott. In this large volume of about 400 pages, he explains the meaning of the Cross of Christ: "What the Cross accomplished" – and, for the purpose of this article, what it means to "live under the cross". The book concludes with a beautiful study of seven places where the word Cross appears in the book of Galatians. Here are those verses for those who want to look them up (1:3-5, 2:19-21, 3:1-3, 3:10-14, 5:11 & 6:12, 5:24, 6:14).

I cannot be fair to John Stott to say here in a paragraph or two what has taken him about 80 pages. But here I go, quoting him:

"Although Jesus may have had the possibility of martyrdom in his mind, the universal nature of his call ("if anyone...") suggests a broader application. It surely is

self-denial which, by this vivid imagery, Jesus is describing.

"To deny ourselves is to behave towards ourselves as Peter did towards Jesus when he denied him three times. The verb is the same (*aparneomai*). He disowned him, repudiated him, turned his back on him. Self-denial is not denying to ourselves the luxuries such as chocolates, cakes, cigarettes, and cocktails (though it may include this); it is actually, denying or disowning ourselves, renouncing our supposed right to go our own way. To deny oneself is ... to turn away from the idolatry self-centredness.

"Paul must have been referring to the same thing when he wrote that those who belong to Christ 'have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires' (Gal.524). No picture can be more graphic than that: an actual taking of a hammer and nails to fasten our slippery fallen nature to the cross and thus to death.

"The traditional word for this is 'mortification'; it is the sustained determination by the power of the Holy Spirit to 'put to death the misdeeds of the body', so that

through this death we may live in fellowship with God."

(See Romans 8:13, cf. Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 2:24. Taken from **THE CROSS OF CHRIST** Page 279. My Apology for breaking his one paragraph into four here.]

Need I say more on the Christians cross, except to ask for your prayer that I can live as I write. I close with a favourite verse of many: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."



Mr. Chacko Thomas

is Author of "Beyond the Natural". (OM 1966-2022: served mostly in OM India, on three OM Ships and OM International and OM Special Projects. Privileged to serve the Lord Jesus in 107 countries.) He can be contacted on chackothomas50@gmail.com



The Crucified Life

(Part I)

Rev. Kuruvillea Chandy

Do you have cravings? I do. I like meat and I like sweets. But I sometimes I wonder about my cravings. The pleasures are just momentary. For a moment I enjoy the taste, but afterwards there is no memory of it. I can't remember tastes. Can you? When I eat something, I recognise the taste of it and the "feeling" lasts only as long as I am eating it. That's why I wonder about the point of indulging in cravings.

Do we eat to live, or do we live to eat? When our Lord was hungry after forty days of fasting, food was on His mind, and He needed to eat. The Devil then tempted Jesus to exploit His divine powers to satisfy Himself. Food is a basic need, and if Jesus had taken care of the need, it wouldn't have been wrong as such. However, Satan

was asking Him to misuse His power – to use it just to serve Himself, not to please God or benefit others.

Jesus countered the Devil's suggestion by stating, "Man does not live by bread alone." He was quoting Deuteronomy 8:3: "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." God didn't give Israel foods that they were familiar with. He gave them something almost unearthly. God said that He gave them non-food so that they will learn that life didn't depend on food, but on God commanding that people should live.

It is because humans don't live by bread alone, that there are so many different philosophies. Human philosophising is an affirmation of this truth.

However, all human philosophies are merely the products of the human mind. As speculations, one man's opinion is as good as another's.

When contrary voices proclaim that each is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then we need to hark back to the author of the Gospel since Christianity is rooted in the person of the historical Jesus. We must assess every proclamation of the Gospel with the givens of the Christian faith. Those givens consist of the historical events of the incarnation, the atoning death of Jesus, and His victorious resurrection. There is also a further given that there is a historical record of these events, namely, the Scriptures. This history of God's dealings with Man, constitutes revelation.

The "Received" Gospel

Belief in God's revelation is basic to Christianity. It is not human speculation about the nature of God and eternity. The "received" nature of the Christian faith is

borne out in the apostolic writings (1 Cor. 15:3,4; 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1; Gal. 1:9,12; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:10; 3:6).

This self-disclosure of God is a manifestation of grace. It is nothing but God's grace that He reveals Himself to Man that turned away from Him, wanting to be a god. But Man, in his pride, has never found grace acceptable, and, for that reason, rejects the revealed Gospel and would rather concoct his own gospels.

In Galatians, Paul argues vehemently against Christians accepting "another gospel." He contends that when it is another, it is not the Gospel (1:7) and curses those who preach any gospel other than Christ's (1:9).

Paul's stand will be described as dogmatism. In our day, being dogmatic is understood as bigottedness. However, there is a need to be dogmatic about what we believe. Either our beliefs are valid or invalid. If our beliefs are valid, then whatever is contrary to our beliefs is invalid. Being dogmatic in the matter of Christian belief is a case of not being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16). If this is

bigottedness, it is derived from the very one who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6).

Such a stance is unpopular in India today. In the name of national integration, minorities are expected to lose their identity. Hinduism may seem to be philosophically sophisticated because of its capacity to absorb new gods and add them to its pantheon. Hinduism does not lose by such a transaction and can even claim to be enriched by such absorption of gods that are foreign to Hinduism. In being inclusive, Hinduism does not give up its character. On the other hand, Christians cannot do that and remain Christian. Belief in Christ is not the same as belief in some indeterminate and amorphous body of philosophical thoughts. Jesus Christ was a historical person, whose teachings and claims are "fixed" by His history. Those claims cannot be changed now. As long as Christianity acknowledges Jesus as its author, the content of Jesus Christ's teachings will remain the basis of belief.

Cost of Discipleship

When Christians compromise on

this, it is because of an unwillingness to pay the cost of discipleship. The cost of following Jesus Christ is the cross. Jesus Himself said, "If anyone comes after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). The disciples of Jesus are those who follow in the steps of the Man of Sorrows who climbed the hill called Calvary. Thus, when Christians fail to stand for their beliefs, it is because they do not wish to pay the high price of following Christ, namely the rigours of discipleship—bearing the cross (of shame, harassment, ostracism, isolation, persecution, possibly martyrdom). Paul notes in his Galatian letter that the diversion from the once given Gospel takes place when the focus shifts from Christ to men and their pleasure (1:10). That is when men make up their own little gospels.

The different gospel that was plaguing Christians at Galatia was the controversy about Judaizing gentile converts. This was the earliest theological controversy of the Church (see Acts 15). In several of Paul's letters we have inklings that this was fairly widespread (see Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8; Col. 2). Basically, the

Judaizers' contention was that faith alone was insufficient. They said that the Old Covenant Law needed to be adhered to. In the final analysis, it was grace that was being denied thus. Even when Man does accept grace, it seems he wants to add just a little of human effort so that it will not be grace alone. That little addition to grace salves the human ego.

Other gospels always advocate that we must have Jesus+ – Jesus plus the distinctive something or the other that the other gospels offer as a super-spiritual experience, which can be mystical, ascetic, or miraculous in nature. "The plus factor" however serves only in pushing Jesus out. Alienated from apostolic witness (4:17), ultimately Jesus Christ Himself becomes worthless (5:2). The plus becomes the high watermark for the group and Jesus becomes secondary. When the plus of another gospel finds acceptance with a Christian, he has in fact "lost connection with the Head" (Col. 2: 19). Not only the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, but His lordship is denied when we allow ourselves to be persuaded by gospels that proclaim Jesus plus their specialty. It is no wonder then that

the plus that removes a person from Christ's rule is enslaving. The liberty in Christ is eroded and bondage to the plus sets in (Gal. 2:4). When the plus becomes the high watermark of practising the faith, achieving this mark of spirituality then becomes the be-all and end-all. For that reason, so often pretensions of having achieved the goal set in, because the desire to belong is oppressive in such cultic groups. Some of these groups are heretic in theology, but others simply require mindless conformity in behaviour. Either way, the members have been made slaves.

Where there is slavery there are always slavers. That is how Paul describes those who mastermind the gospel of Jesus+. They are as devious as spies who infiltrate other nations, and are in the vanguard of the army that takes away people's liberties (2:4). It is a mark of the cults that they are led by overbearing personalities that demand absolute mindless allegiance to their will. Wherever there is a tendency to subdue and regiment believers, there exists also the danger of the group becoming a cult—if not heretic in doctrine, at least one centred on human personalities, and for

Christians the shift of focus from Christ to human personalities is itself a heresy.

According to Paul, when the first Church Council discussed the Judaizing controversy, the only stipulation was that those who worked among the Gentiles should not forget the poor (Gal. 2:9-10). Yet, when we refer to the record of that Council's meeting (Acts 15:23-29), we find nothing about caring for the poor. What happened at the Council was that a decision was taken not to allow Judaizing to split the church. That was love at work. Even though love is ultimately not a matter of a "command performance," the Law can be summarised in terms of love (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:18-10; 1 John 5:2, 3). That was why it was not laid down but was surely the operative principle, and the mutual dependence of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians must surely have been discussed. Paul skips over all of the details and summarises that, ultimately, the reality of Christian identity and faith does not lie in outward symbolisms as much as in practising faith in such a way that it produces love (Gal. 5:6). That's because our faith is in the One who came in love and whose every word and action were of

love. Not only so, but He specifically said that the mark of His disciples would be the love among them (Jn. 13:34) and that their unity would be the only convincing proof that Jesus was indeed from God (17:23).

Finally, the plus is an avoidance of the cross that is so essential to Christian identity and discipleship (Gal. 6:12). When men make up their gospels, their focus shifts from Christ to their own pleasures (1:10) and it is the Cross that then gets left out.

The Cross of Jesus

The apostolic understanding of identification with Christ was described in terms of bearing about the body the marks of Jesus (6:17), that is the "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. 4: 10). Before crucifixion, the victim was stripped of all that is humanly valued, and all his belongings became the spoils of his executioners as it happened with Christ's seamless robe which occasioned the gambling at the foot of the cross (Jn. 19:23-24). Those who cherish and hold on to their pluses are not ready to be crucified.

The word 'crucified' occurs four times in the letter to the Galatian church.

There is one reference to the historical crucifixion of Jesus (3:1). The other references are about the crucifying of Christians themselves (2:20; 5:24; 6:14).

The centrality of the Cross to apostolic preaching is evident in any examination of the New Testament. The idea of God hanging on a cross was ridiculous to the Greeks and scandalous to the Jews, but for Paul there was nothing else to preach, but Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23). There was nothing else to boast, about except the Cross of Jesus (Gal. 6:14).

The importance of that historical event is in no way minimised when Paul talks of the crucifixion of Christians. Such a spiritual understanding of the crucifixion needed in Christian's life in no way implies that the crucifixion of Jesus was mythological. For Jesus, it was a physical experience. The pain and the agony of the cross were real. The reason Paul talks of crucifixion as the personal experience of Christians is that, in his view, God's purpose is to reveal His Son in

the life of the follower of Christ (1:19) and so, he himself experiences the birth pains of wanting to see Christ formed in the lives of the Christians he was writing to (4:17).

Paul was not writing about some exclusive mystical experience that he had had, that made him a special kind of Christian. He says that his ministry aimed at the formation of Christ in the lives of those he ministered to (4:17). It was not a special experience. That was his norm for his life and ministry.

We are not called to be imitations of Christ, but representative Christs in our world (Acts 1:8). As He once was the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12; 9:5; 12:26), so now we are no less than what Jesus was to the world—the Light. But to take the place of Christ is an impossibility unless Christ Himself possesses us.

Our status is that of being "in Christ" and we do have a calling to live a life in accordance with the resurrection life of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-5, 8-11). Paul suggests that this should be a matter of reckoning (6:11). That is, we calculate that we are in Christ. We should mentally accept that this is

how it should be. This logic and rationale should lead to an attitude of submission to God (6:13, 17, 18). However, there exists a constant struggle with sinful tendencies (7:14-20). For all the spirit's willingness, the flesh has its weaknesses, and the intensity of our weaknesses is greater than that of our strengths so that our strengths are overpowered and undermined by our weaknesses. Paul almost despairs but concludes triumphantly that the deliverance and the victory lie in Jesus (7:25). As long as I seek the strength within myself, I discover only my weaknesses. But "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4: 13). It is not I but Christ who has to do the living in me (Gal. 2:20). For the Christian, living is simply allowing Christ to live in himself. Paul wrote, "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Christian living is just Christ living in the Christian.

While we have compulsions, we struggle with our besetting sins. The focus of our attention is on the problem. The more we struggle, the more it besets. When we shift the focus from the problem, no matter how serious it is, and look to Jesus in love instead of having any sense of

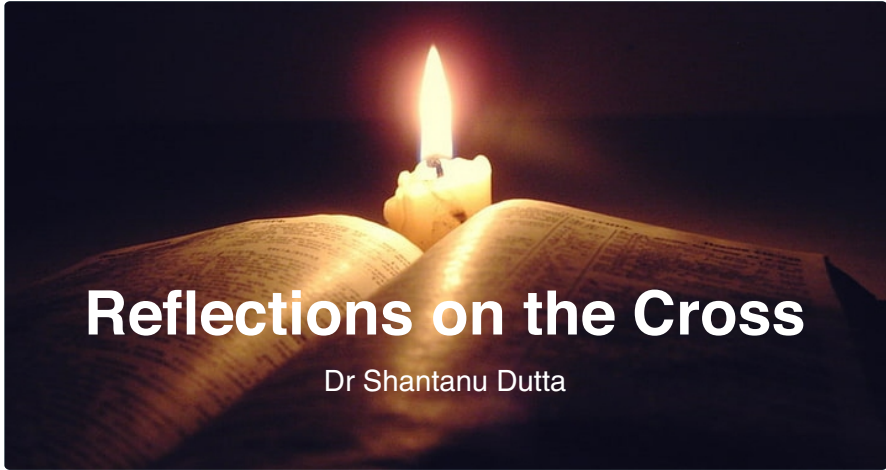
compulsiveness, then we find release from our slavery. I struggled against sin and lost. Then one day I stopped looking at the problem. I determined not to feel compulsive about it anymore. When I stopped giving attention to the problem and gave my attention to Jesus just as I was, the problem withered. It had been starved to death. That is how it is for all our Christian lives. It is possible to discover that one is crucified with Christ. The life which we now live in the body is lived by Jesus living in us (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17). Such a total identification with Christ in His crucifixion implies that we will not respond to the stimulations of the flesh (5:24) and of the world (6:14).

[To be continued]



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Reflections on the Cross

Dr Shantanu Dutta

As far as observances go, Christmas is a far more widespread occurrence. Celebrations begin a month in advance, and preparations are even earlier. Good Friday and Easter, at least in the protestant evangelical tradition, are far more sedate. In most traditions, the 40 days of Lent are not formally observed—Ash Wednesday in some and Maundy Thursday in some more. Even Good Friday services can be like any regular service or a long 3-hour one. Easter, of course, is celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm. There are also some traditions that many families associate with what we often call Holy Week.

The importance of Christmas

celebrations is worth discussing because of the primacy of the Cross and not the cradle in the Christian Life. Jesus was born only to die on the Cross, and we are not saved by Jesus's birth but by His death on the Cross. The Cross holds profound significance in the life of a Christian, serving as a central symbol and foundation of our faith. Its importance transcends mere physical representation; it embodies the core beliefs, values, and experiences that define Christianity.

At its essence, the Cross represents sacrifice and redemption. We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, willingly endured crucifixion on

the Cross to atone for humanity's sins. This act of selfless love and ultimate sacrifice is central to Christian theology, illustrating God's mercy and grace towards humanity. The Cross, therefore, serves as a powerful reminder of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, offering hope and salvation to believers. The physical Cross was an instrument of Roman cruelty, reserved for the worst criminals. Jesus' crucifixion wasn't just a brutal execution; it was a public humiliation. Yet, for Christians, it represents the ultimate act of love. Jesus's sacrifice bridged the gap between a perfect God and imperfect mankind, offering the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation. This concept of substitutionary atonement is central to the salvific power of the Cross. Jesus, the perfect lamb, takes the place of imperfect humanity. His sacrifice appeases God's just wrath against sin and offers the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation. Through faith in Jesus and his sacrifice, the burden of sin is lifted, and the path to God is opened.

Jesus' crucifixion was followed by his resurrection, demonstrating his triumph over death and paving the way for eternal life for believers. Embracing the Cross affirms our belief in the resurrection and the promise of new life in Christ. It serves as a beacon of hope in times of struggle and adversity, reminding believers that even in their darkest moments, they can find strength and redemption through faith. This sacrificial death is seen as a substitutionary atonement, whereby Jesus, as the perfect and sinless Son of God, offered himself as a sacrifice to satisfy the demands of divine justice.

The Apostle Paul succinctly captures this theological concept in his letter to the Romans, stating, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Through his death on the Cross, Jesus paid the price for sin—death—thereby offering the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation to all who believe in him. The significance of the Cross in the forgiveness of sins is

multifaceted. Firstly, it demonstrates the extent of God's love and grace towards humanity.

Despite humanity's rebellion and sinfulness, God chose to offer forgiveness and reconciliation through the sacrifice of his Son. This act of divine love exemplifies the depth of God's mercy and the lengths he is willing to go to restore a relationship with humanity. The Cross underscores the seriousness of sin and the necessity of atonement. Sin is not merely brushed aside or overlooked; instead, it is confronted head-on through the sacrificial death of Jesus. The Cross serves as a powerful reminder of the gravity of sin and the price required for its forgiveness.

The Cross provides a basis for the believer's assurance of forgiveness and salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ and his finished work on the Cross, we can receive forgiveness for our sins and experience reconciliation with God. This assurance is grounded not in human effort or merit but in the unchanging character of God and

the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

Practically, the forgiveness of sins through the Cross has profound implications for the lives of believers. It offers liberation from guilt and shame, enabling individuals to experience freedom and restoration in their relationship with God. Moreover, it motivates believers to extend forgiveness to others, following the example of Christ and embodying the principles of love, mercy, and reconciliation. Living a life shaped by the Cross can be challenging. Sometimes, following Jesus' teachings feels counterintuitive or even dangerous. However, the Cross serves as a constant source of strength. It reminds believers that they are not alone, that God understands their struggles, and that, ultimately, good will prevail.

Jesus' sacrifice wasn't meant to be a passive act of mercy. It compels believers to share the message of salvation with others and to spread the love and forgiveness they have received. This can take many forms: acts of charity, spreading kindness, or

simply offering a listening ear to someone in need. The life of a believer is a continuous journey, a constant dance between acknowledging their shortcomings and striving to live a life that reflects the values embodied by the Cross. It's a journey of growth fueled by faith, hope, and the unwavering belief that the light of the resurrection shines through even in the darkest moments.

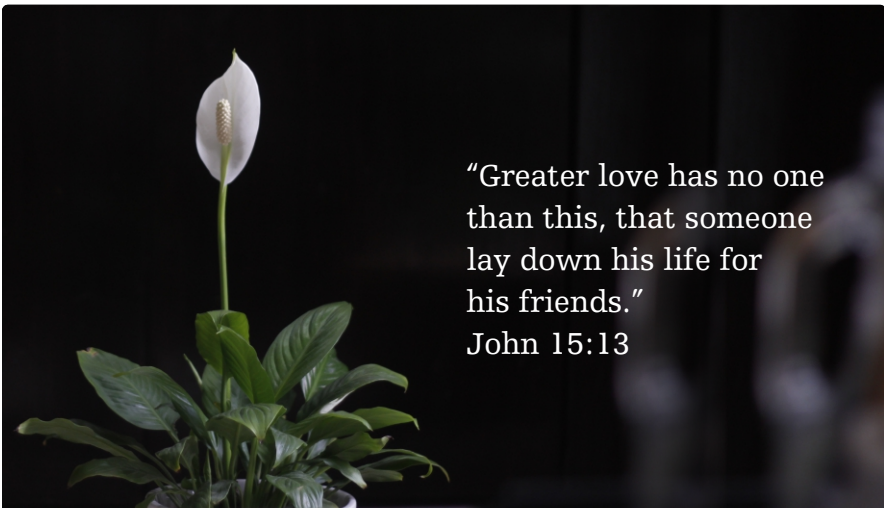
The Cross serves as a call to discipleship and self-denial. Jesus has instructed his followers to take up their Cross and follow him (Matt 16 v 24), emphasising the importance of sacrifice and commitment in the Christian journey. For believers, the Cross

symbolises a willingness to surrender worldly desires and ambitions to live according to God's will. It serves as a reminder to prioritise spiritual growth and service to others above personal gain, echoing Jesus' teachings of love, humility, and compassion.



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Intercessory
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Points



April 2024

1 MONDAY Thank God for the new month. Pray that you and your family would draw near to God and gain strength from Him.

2 TUESDAY Pray that the Lord Jesus would become more and more real to you as you submit to His sovereignty. Pray for one another that you will have right relationship with God.

3 WEDNESDAY Pray for our nation that we may be submissive to God and be a blessing to the nations around us. Pray for the leaders of our country that they would uphold integrity and honesty as they serve the people.

4 THURSDAY Pray for the people at your workplace. Pray that you would show Christ's love to them and be a good influence on them. Pray that there would be safe environment and health care at all workplaces.

5 FRIDAY Pray that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would penetrate deeply and spread widely as believers witness Christ to the world.

6 SATURDAY Pray that God the Father would grow our faith and love for God the Son who died on the cross for our sins.

7 SUNDAY Continue to pray for those whom you know are not yet in the Lord. Pray that God would draw them to Christ. Pray that the Holy Spirit would make them desire eternal life and accept Christ finished work on the cross.

8 MONDAY Pray for school children as they start a new session today. Thank God for the opportunity to learn new things.

9 TUESDAY Pray for the churches in India. Pray for continued strength. Pray also for

unity within the church. Pray that God's Word would be taught and obeyed by the help of the Holy Spirit.

10 WEDNESDAY Pray for Punjab Mobile Bible Training that will take place during the month. Pray for both the trainers and the participants that they would be trained and equipped for the good works that God called them for.

11 THURSDAY Pray for the persecuted believers that they would find comfort and strength in Christ, the head of the Church. Pray that their sufferings will not be in vain.

12 FRIDAY Pray for fair and peaceful general elections. Pray that God would raise leaders who have the willingness to serve the people sacrificially.

13 SATURDAY Pray that Christ's death and resurrection may bring new encouragement, strength, and motivation to live a godly Christian life.

14 SUNDAY Pray that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

15 MONDAY Pray for all EFI

m e m b e r s (C h u r c h e s , organizations, and individuals) that they may demonstrate integrity and transparency in all their dealings. Pray also that they may act as role models for others to follow.

16 TUESDAY Pray for D6 Family Conference organized by Asia Evangelical Alliance to be held from 17-18 May via Zoom. Pray that many in India would respond and sign up for this conference.

17 WEDNESDAY Pray for the ministry of EFI. Pray that the Lord would mightily use EFI to support and strengthen the churches and individuals.

18 THURSDAY Pray that you may raise your standard of giving as a recipient of God's grace and providence.

19 FRIDAY Pray that child labour would be eradicated, and every child would enjoy their childhood. Pray for God's protection over them. Pray also for EFI Children at Risk to be used in ways that would change the lives of many children.

20 SATURDAY Pray that every believer would be able to worship without fear and disturbance.

21 SUNDAY Pray for healing and courage to share the Gospel boldly. Pray for freedom to choose, practice, and share our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

22 MONDAY Pray that we would have the wisdom to care for the earth. Pray that we would steward and care for the good of future generations and all God's creatures.

23 TUESDAY Let us pray today for those in the remote places that they would be provided with basic medical facilities. Pray for the state leaders to be mindful of their plights and work towards this goal actively.

24 WEDNESDAY Pray that we may not be weary of doing good. Pray for fresh desire and the ability to serve God with excellence.

25 THURSDAY Continue to pray for children in your neighbourhood. Pray for their

enthusiasm, God's provision, and protection on them throughout the year.

26 FRIDAY Pray that God would give you the ability and strength to obey His Great Commission.

27 SATURDAY Pray for fresh desire to know the Lord in His fullness.

28 SUNDAY Pray for your pastor that he would be renewed and transformed as he meditates on the living Word of God. Pray also that the name of Jesus would be lifted high and be praised.

29 MONDAY Pray for the people who are struggling with drug abuse. Pray that they would turn to God who is mighty in power and experience relief and release.

30 TUESDAY Thank God for His love, concern, and care throughout the month.

*But we do not belong to those
who shrink back and are destroyed,
ut to those who have faith and are saved.
Hebrews 10:39*



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EFI North East centre is located in the heart of Guwahati city. The centre is open for members of EFI and those recommended by EFI members and can be used for conducting seminars, workshops, retreats or even for accommodation during transit.

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