

JESUS, I MY CROSS HAVE TAKEN

Mark 8:34

One of the more popular pieces of jewelry is a cross. HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE A CROSS in some jewelry item?

- Earring, necklace, bracelet, tattoo, nose ring???
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We can see just how pervasive it is through its appearance on the necks of rappers, singers, waiters, actors, strangers, friends, family. Each of these people may wear a cross for different reasons. Some may choose to wear it to show a spiritual side; others may wear it as a fashion statement or simple keepsake.

In biblical times the cross represented something offensive – something the average person avoided talking about. **The cross was the symbol of execution and death.** It would be like someone today wearing a little electric chair necklace. But since the death and resurrection of Christ, the cross has taken on a meaning of freedom, deliverance, and rescue.

This is an old hymn written around **1824 by Henry Lyte** has been popular because of the Christ centered depth of the lyrics. (707 Trinity Hymnal Elleside 8.7 8.7D)
Like many older hymns, it can be sung to various tunes, but it didn't really get my attention until a new tune came out in 2001 through the RUF Indelible Grace version. That's the tune we sang today.

This hymn, like other great hymns, has a Christ centered focus. **The biblical truth undergirding the hymn is that since all the Big Eternal Questions are resolved through the Person and work of Christ, then we as believers can know supernatural joy and peace, even in the midst of trials.**

Taking up our cross is SOMEONE WE MEET before it is something we do. It is not the means or basis of our salvation; it is the fruit of a changed heart. We can die to self because Jesus died for us. PHIL 2:5-8

STANZA 1 TEXTS

MARK 8

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 35For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.36For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."**

PHIL 3

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ

EPH 1

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

STANZA 1. . .

Jesus, I my cross have taken, All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition, All I've sought or hoped or known;
Yet how rich is my condition, God and heav'n are still my own.

The hymn begins by heeding the call of Christ in Mark 8 and Luke 9:23 by declaring "I my cross have taken." What are the implications of this statement?

This implies that to lose everything, to have nothing, and even to perish every fond ambition that this world has to offer in order to follow Christ are the richest of conditions. – Ji-Sub Chung.

This reflects the cry of Psalm 73:25

Whom have I in heaven *but You?* And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Knowing Christ frees us from being bound and defined by the opinions of the world. Therefore, what matters to us is not the world and its opinions. Even while the gospel goes forth and bears fruit, we know that the world will respond to our confession like they have with Christ: Rejection.

The Christian life involves a great exchange: The Gospel "changes the price tags" and enables us to lay aside what the world calls valuable in order to have the riches of knowing Christ. In Phil 3 Paul speaks of laying aside his status and achievements and religious standing – even counting them as "dung or rubbish" IN ORDER TO GAIN Christ. That is crazy talk to the world.

Jim Elliot (Christian missionary who died in Ecuador) said – "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

Becoming a Christian is not like changing your hairdo, or your favorite sports team, or even changing political parties. IT IS A CHANGE OF CORE VALUES and identify. This theme plays out throughout the hymn.

LIKE ALL HYMNS, WE SING THIS ONE BY FAITH.

In reality, we don't live this out as we should. It is all too easy to get caught up in what the world says is valuable, beautiful or important. It is so easy for us to think that the richness of our condition is found in what we have or will have. God and the "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places" are put on the back burner.

STANZA 2 TEXTS:

John 2:23ff

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

1 Peter 4:12-14

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you

John 15:18-19

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. 19If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

STANZA 2

2. Let the world despise and leave me, They have left my Savior, too.
Human hearts and looks deceive me; Thou art not, like man, untrue;
And while Thou shalt smile upon me, God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate and friends may shun me; Show Thy face, and all is bright.

The Bible never assumes that God's people will be popular. Many or most of the NT letters were written to those who were experiencing hostility, which became full persecution under Nero in 64 AD. Various degrees of persecution continued until the Edict of Milan was issued in 313 AD. In recent years the church has experienced persecution in many countries equal to or worse than that known under the Roman Empire.

What has sustained believers over the years?

The knowledge that despite outward circumstances, those who know Christ still have the love of the Father, and the world cannot take away that which is of eternal value.

STANZA 3 TEXTS:

JOHN 14:27

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

PSALM 119:50, This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.

,71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

,75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

92, If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction

3. Man may trouble and distress me, 'Twill but drive me to Thy breast;
Life with trials hard may press me, Heav'n will bring me sweeter rest.
O 'tis not in grief to harm me While Thy love is left to me;
O 'twere not in joy to charm me, Were that joy unmixed with Thee.

by Ji-Sub Chung offers this insight

The second half of Lyte's verse may be a bit confusing. So to make more sense of the 19th century wording, a 21st century translation could be along the lines of "harm will not bring me grief while God loves; it would be no joy at all if that joy were mixed with anything other than You Lord."

Our confidence is not in our earthly position but in our spiritual placement. Our comfort is not from having our best life now, but earnestly seeking the return on the Lord (1 Thess. 4:18). We have

confidence and comfort knowing that our Father has divinely appointed trials that would aid in our sanctification. In light of this, we are each called to challenge our own soul to remember the work of the cross.

This stanza echoes the previous one, but it adds in the reality that trials are opportunities to draw closer to God, and they focus our hearts on eternity. SEE PSALM 119

I know that this may sound “easier said than done”, but it is the biblical reality, and the reality of saints throughout history. More importantly, it is the example of Christ Himself “who for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross despising the shame.” HEBREWS 12:2

STANZA 4 TEXTS

Psalm 94:16ff.

Who will stand up for me against evildoers?

Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?

17 If the LORD had not been my help,

My soul would soon have dwelt in *the abode of silence*.

18 If I should say, "My foot has slipped,"

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.

19 When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,

Your consolations delight my soul.

JAMES 1:2-5

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

ROMANS 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

4. Go, then, earthly fame and treasure, Come disaster, scorn and pain
In Thy service, pain is pleasure, With Thy favor, loss is gain
I have called Thee Abba Father, I have stayed my heart on Thee
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather; All must work for good to me.

While we may not ever say or pray, “Come disaster, scorn and pain”, IF WE understand life, we know that they will come. And the Spirit led response is that of James 1: Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

That is the supernatural life of the HOLY Spirit.

VOV – in the Valley – Sov Grace Music

So let me learn that the cross Precedes the crown To be low is to be high

That the valley's where You make me More like Christ

That the broken heart is the healed heart,

That the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit

That the repenting soul is the victorious soul,

That to have nothing is to possess all,
That to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
That to give is to receive
That the valley is the place of vision.

STANZA 5 – TEXTS

ROMANS 8:15FF

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

PHIL 1:21-24

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if *I am* to live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose

Rom 8:32

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? . . .

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord

Gal 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

5. Take, my soul, Thy full salvation;
Rise o'er sin and fear and care;
Joy to find in every station
Something still to do or bear.
Think what Spirit dwells within thee,
What a Father's smile is thine,
What a Savior died to win thee:
Child of heav'n, shouldst thou repine?

Think about the Spirit that dwells within you, think about the love that the Father has for you, think about the Savior that died for you. In light of this how sweet do the delights of eternal paradise seem? Let us actively look forward to His return with full faith and propelled by prayer.

STANZA 6 – TEXTS

Eph 6:16-18

in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Phil 3:20,21

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Romans 8

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us

2 Cor 4:16ff

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

6. Hasten on from grace to glory, Armed by faith and winged by prayer;
Heav'n's eternal days before thee, God's own hand shall guide thee there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission, Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition, Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

LIFE LOOKS DIFFERENT WHEN VIEWED FROM ETERNITY. IT IS so hard to remember because we live in a culture that is so focused on the right now. There is little appreciation of history, and no thought of Eternal consequences.

The proper question then is not if you wear a cross or not. Rather, the question is: have you taken up your cross and left all to follow Him?

Jean Calvin describes the Christian life as one of dying to self, i.e. taking up your cross

DYING TO SELF=Taking up Your Cross
(unknown origin)

When you are forgotten, neglected or purposely set at nought, and you don't sting or hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy at being counted worthy for being able to suffer for Christ, that is Taking up Your Cross.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient loving silence, that is Taking up Your Cross.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any impunctuality, any annoyance, when you come face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensitivity and endure it as Jesus endured it, that is Taking up Your Cross.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, any interruption by the will of God, that is Taking up Your Cross.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation or to recount your own good works or to itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is Taking up Your Cross.

When you can see your brothers and sisters have their needs met, and you can honestly rejoice in spirit and feel no envy nor question God while your own needs are far greater and in more desperate circumstances, that is Taking up Your Cross.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly finding no rebellion or resentment rising in your heart, that is Taking up Your Cross

ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT

The cross is the ground of our salvation and it is where we see the Grace and Justice of God meet, and is the focal point of the manifestation of the Love of God for us.

Healthy BRANCHES AND FRUIT grow from the work of the Holy Spirit applying the work of the cross in our lives. .

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