

Think Out Loud with Me:

Christ was crucified; and Christ is God – this is Christian confession!

Paul wrote: Romans 6:6 *We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.⁷ (For someone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he is never going to die again; death no longer has mastery over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you are also to think of yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*



And 2 Corinthians 5:14 *For the love of Christ controls us, since we have concluded this, that Christ died for all; therefore all have died. He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised.⁸*

Another author wrote: Hebrews 2:9 *We see Jesus, who for a moment, was made lower than the angels crowned with glory and honor, for he suffered death so that by God's grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone. You see, it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all that is exists, in bringing many sons into glory, to make the (ἀρχηγός, either leader, ruler, prince or originator, founder) of their deliverance perfect (τελειόω complete, finish, accomplish, bring to its goal, perfect) through sufferings. For indeed he who makes holy and those being made holy all out of One, so he is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

First, our Lord suffered physically. His body, like our own, was severely limited in its powers of endurance and highly sensitive to pain. In a controversial verse Luke reports that he sweat blood in his anguish. *Luke 22:44 In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.* In common with other men, he suffered, in that body, hunger, thirst, weariness and exhaustion. Beyond other men, he suffered the physical agony of Calvary: the whipping, the immolation, the many hours' suspension, fully conscious, upon the cross itself. These experiences became the church's understanding of Jesus' atoning life mission: *Luke 24:26 "Didn't the Messiah have to suffer like this before entering his glory*

Our Lord suffered emotionally. He existed in ordinary human psyche (sinfulness excepted), knowing times of joy and contentment. Yet he also knew the dark side of our psyche. He was distressed by the spiritual hardness and ignorance of those among whom he ministered, grieved by their opposition and pained by their misery. He wept/cried over Jerusalem, a symbol of resistance to God, who missed the hour of their visitation. He is exceeding sorrowful – He was *Matthew 26:38 "My soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death."* He throws himself on the ground in the intensity of his agony.

Finally – he was forsaken: The Lord suffered in relationships: Christ loved but was rejected. The treatment he received from his immediate disciples was the most painful. They were chosen precisely "to be with him" *Mark 14:50 Then all the disciples left him and fled.* He died rejected, forsaken, and alone. In Jesus' cross was to be found the new form of worship that made Christians different from historic Israel. Jesus' cross was now the church's altar [not the cross on an altar] but it was not to be seen as only history.

Hebrews 13:12-21

Jesus [like ancient Hebrew sacrifices] suffered outside the gate in order to make people holy through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the humiliation he endured. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we seek that city which is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do well and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls/lives; do it as men who will give account. Let them minister joyfully, and not in grief, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The historic life of Jesus was to become the experience of each individual Christian. All Christians were expected individually and personally to become identified with Christ and Christ alone. As Jesus was alone with his Father, the individual believer was to become alone with God through Christ. As he bore the humiliation of earth, each follower of Christ was to also to walk day by day in the cross and be identified with their Lord. The Jesus experience was to become the common Christian experience. *Galatians 2:19-20 It is through the law that I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!*

The Christian was now to bear the rejection by ancient Israel - for the early Jewish Christians this was a painful rejection - and to become one with the crucified Christ. Christ on his cross was not only the symbol of Christianity but was the theology and doctrine of the church. The Christians no only found no embarrassment in how Jesus died but they discovered that this was their message and the cross became for them a thing of honor and beauty. The cross revealed God's love. The cross revealed the depth of human sin. The cross revealed the absolute necessity of our old life to die so that it could be resurrected by God in a new form of living. The cross fulfilled the Law of Moses and became the true liberator that set free the slaves under the power of God.

Christians must discover how to worship. This worship was not to be a ceremony performed in a church gathering. The church community coming together was in fact the church celebrating collectively what they had been doing all week long individually. Believers worshiped by offering their body to Christ just as he had offered his to the One he called his father. Christ offered up his life up to God and now each believer was to worship by offering their entire being in a life of surrender and adoration to the Christ who had died for them. *Galatians 5:24-25 Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit.*

The cross was to shape them and form them to the spirit and nature of Christ himself. This would bring about a life conformed to what was revealed on Golgotha. In the cross experience, daily life is now to be lived by the true disciple of Jesus. This is a cross shaped theology and a cross-shaped ministry