

The Cross

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Irony

(1 Cor. 2:7–8; Col. 2:15)

The cross of Jesus Christ is the greatest irony of human history. God is crucified by mankind in their effort to get rid of him in favor of their religion—but in the process the power of God is unleashed. By outward appearances, Jesus' crucifixion was his worst defeat—but in the unseen spiritual reality, the cross led to ultimate victory. The cross also represents death to self in the believer's life—and in the same way leads to the fullness of God and a life of resurrection power.

Atonement

(Rom. 3:23–24; Col. 2:14)

God in Christ took on the punishment he had decreed as the penalty of sin—death—because sin cannot be remedied, only destroyed. And having sacrificed himself for us in substitutionary atonement to fulfill the law of God, he calls us to follow him in the new life and new identity he provides and also to live sacrificially for him and for others.

God's Love

(Rom. 5:8; Col. 1:19–22)

The cross demonstrates the immeasurable love of God for all mankind in that God in Christ willingly died on our behalf so we could be reconciled to him.

Death to Self

(Luke 9:23; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14)

The cross represents God's call to those who would follow Christ to shoulder our own cross and die to ourselves, to our own egos and carnality, each and every day, that we would be filled with the life and Spirit of God.

Resurrection Power

(1 Cor. 1:17–18; 2 Cor. 13:4)

Jesus' death on the cross, on our behalf, broke the power of sin, the law, and the devil. This power burst forth in Jesus' resurrection, which broke the power of spiritual death. And this resurrection power continues on in the lives of believers.

The Defining Factor

(1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 6:12; Phil. 3:18)

The cross is the defining factor of our faith versus all generic God talk. It is the nonnegotiable demarcation faith—a stumbling block to those who turn away and the beginning of opposition for many who follow. Some will neutralize their response to the cross and think of it as one religious symbol among many others, all equal. But the cross will ultimately not be neutralized. In the end it will either be loved or hated. The nature of the cross allows no middle ground.

Absolute Centrality

(1 Cor. 2:1–5)

Without the cross and what it represents there is no Christian faith; there is no church; there is no forgiveness, no new life, no hope that the New Testament professes. But with the cross we have all of these things and more because of all it represents to us, all God has done for us, and all we do in response to God as we anticipate and experience the fulfillment of his promises.