

# The Way of the Cross

## #1 Jesus Is Condemned

### 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

### Leader:

Lord, it's too late for you to be quiet. You have spoken too much. You have fought too much; it was bound to happen. You chose to touch decaying lepers, you spoke fearlessly with unacceptable strangers, you ate with notorious sinners, and you said that streetwalkers would be the first in Paradise. You called the religious people a breed of vipers. You told them that they were like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but on the inside are full of dead bones and filth. Now they are avenging themselves.

### People:

Lord, I know that if I try to live a little like you, I shall be judged. They will single me out. I am afraid to turn my back on the world. The world invokes compromise, getting along with everyone, going with the crowd. And yet Lord, I know that you are right. You alone are free. Help me to fight; help me to speak; help me to live your Gospel... to the end...to the folly of the cross.

sometimes, Lord. It is hardly the stress which comes from holy work. My body is weighed down. I have fallen short of the call. I yearn for your peace. I yearn to rest in the truth that I have joyfully embodied your grace. Help me, Lord, to sleep in your peace.

## #14 Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb

### 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those on any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

### Leader:

Let's forget it now, and all go home. You are buried and the stone is in place. Your family is in tears; your friends are lost. This time it is really over.

### People:

Lord, it is not over! The Way of the Cross lives on! Your resurrection will only be complete as I accept my Way of the Cross. I am on the road. I have a small share of your suffering as I ache for a lost, orphan world. Here lies my hope. There is not a fraction of my suffering that you have not already lived and transformed into salvation. As the road is hard; as it leads to another dying, I know that you are there, beyond the grave, bringing rainbow peace.

This "Way of the Cross" was adapted from Clarence Enzier's Everyone's Way of the Cross and Michael Quoist's Way of the Cross found in Prayers.

**Leader:**

A few hours more, a few minutes more, few instants more. For thirty-three years it has been going on. For thirty-three years you have lived minute by minute. You cannot escape now. You are at your last moment, at the edge of a precipice. You must take the last step; the last leap of love. You leave us with words never to be forgotten: “My God, my God, why...?” “Father, forgive them...” “I thirst.” “It is finished.”

All the world is hushed.

**People:**

My Jesus, my Lord, what can I say or do?

You die for a new world; you die for a new me.

Lord, help me to die for you. Help me to let go.

I offer you my death; accepting now this way of the cross, for it is the way of freedom and a new creation.

## **#13 Jesus Is Taken Down**

**Isaiah 53:4-5**

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced by our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

**Leader:**

Jesus, your work is done. You can leave your Cross. You can come down to rest, you have surely earned it.

Slowly you slip down, like a man weary of labor and drowsy with sleep. You rest in peace. Over your face, calm and serene, there passes a ray of joy. All has been accomplished.

**People:**

Thus each night, my day ends. I fall asleep. What state I am in

## **#2 Jesus Bears His Cross**

**Luke 9:23-24**

Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

**Leader:**

Lord, here is your cross. Your Cross! As if it were *your* cross!

You had no cross and you came to get ours, and all through your life you took upon yourself, each day, the sins of the world. You have to go forward... and bend... and suffer. The cross must be carried.

**People:**

Lord, you walk on silently: is it true then, that there is a time for speaking and a time for silence? Lord, it is hard to carry a cross. The more I see evil in the world, the heavier is the cross on my shoulders. Help me to carry my cross. Remind me that in carrying my cross, I carry yours as well. And though I bear only a sliver of your cross, you carry all of mine.

## **#3 Jesus Falls for the First Time**

**Mark 10:35-38**

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.” “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked. They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” “You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

**Leader:**

You fall. For a moment you stagger, then you fall prostrate. God in the dust. And the people watch.

**People:**

Lord, I decided to follow you. I set out with confidence. I gave myself freely to you, but then I caught sight of another path. Many were taking this other path. It seemed so much the happier path.

But now I have fallen. And I see that this way is littered with broken bodies and souls. This is the way of an orphan world. Lord, can I return to you?

## **#4 Jesus' Mother Looks On**

**Luke 2:34-35**

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

**Leader:**

Lord, I pity your mother. She follows you. She walks in the crowd, but she doesn't take her eyes off of you. Every gesture of yours, every blow dealt you, every wound pierces her heart. She knows your suffering. She suffers your sufferings. She joins in your passion.

**People:**

Mingled with the crowd, I accompany men and women on their Way of the Cross. To watch the pain of people in need is harder than to bear my own cross.

I feel so powerless; every day I become acquainted with new injustices and new souls who hunger and thirst without relief. But I, too, must stand and watch. May I never avert my eyes. May I never close my heart, that in witnessing the suffering of the world, I suffer and join in your redemption.

## **#11 Jesus Offers Life To A Thief**

**Luke 23:39-43**

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God, as you are under the same sentence?" "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

**Leader:**

There you are, Lord, doing your work, only to be interrupted by a couple of thieves. Do they not know that you are the King of kings? Why don't they let you die in peace? Is it not enough that all the respectable people have stretched you to the breaking point? Must these petty men drain your heart even more?

**People:**

Here I understand. I engage by body and soul in the work of your kingdom-building only to be interrupted again. All manner of insignificant people come barging into my life. I try to press on only to find another intruder grabbing at my soul. And yet, Lord, even in this thief you find redemptive work to be done. Even on this cross you offer freedom to the captive. You find grace in the darkest moments. Help me, Lord, to be always on the watch for your saving work.

## **#12 Jesus Dies**

**Philippians 2:5-8**

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

**People:**

And so, Lord, I must give up all these trappings which hinder me and hide me from your sight. This “possessing” must die as it isolates me from you and others.

I don’t like this, Lord. It’s always a question of dying! How demanding you are! I give, and you want more.

But if you want all, Lord, take all. Strip me of my last garment.

## **#10 Jesus Nailed To The Cross**

**Galatians 2:20**

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.

**Leader:**

Lord, they stretch you to full length on the Cross. Hammer on nail stabbing at flesh; hammer on nail stabbing at flesh, and it echoes through the eons.

Give us permission, Lord, to turn away. How can we look upon this sight? How can we retain our sanity and see this suffering? If only we could blame ruthless Romans or the secluded Sanhedrin.

**People:**

My God, I look at you and think: Is my soul worth this much? What can I give you in return? Is there a cross ready to my measure?

I know the answer is: “Yes.” Each day, each minute the invitation is there: to die to this live, and to be born anew to a new life. But Lord, I loathe this dying; this cross.

And yet, Lord, I can meet you nowhere else. It is here, on the cross, that you beckon me. It is here that eternity opens her door.

## **#5 Simon Helps Carry Jesus’ Cross**

**Mark 15:21 and Galatians 6:2**

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**Leader:**

He passed by on the road; they pressed him into service.

Who is this man who happened along this tragic walk? Is he a man of some importance? Is he sympathetic to your ministry, Lord? Is he bothered by this misfortune?

Could it have been anyone, Lord? Anyone who trudges along life’s highway only to run into the Son of Man carrying a nasty cross?

**People:**

Lord, I get pressed into service. Sometimes I am at just the right place at the wrong time, and I get pressed into service. I do my community work and church duty.

But Lord, I seldom see you at the intersection. I don’t recognize you! I do my good deed and breathe a sigh of relief.

How can I miss you, Lord? Can I see that this service is more than just a command to take care of business? Lord, open my eyes.

## **#6 Jesus Falls For A Second Time**

**Luke 21:36**

Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

**Leader:**

Lord, you are spent. Again you have fallen to the ground.

Beyond the weight of the cross, you are lost in exhaustion.

Where is your strength that you continue on?

**People:**

Recurrent suffering numbs the will. I get used to evil. A little self-indulgence here; a compromise over there; giving in and giving up, it all obscures my vision. My ears gradually close; I no longer hear the cries... even my own cries.

Lord, keep me young in my efforts. Spare me the bondage of habit, which lulls me to sleep.

## **#7 Jesus Rebukes The Daughters Of Jerusalem**

**Luke 23:27-29**

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say: “Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!”

**Leader:**

The women weep. Are they filled with pity? Is their duty to be carried out after their men have condemned an innocent man? Do they really understand? Are they really helpless, Lord, to effect your justice?

Lord, you see them, and you hear them, but you say, “Weep first for ***your*** sins.”

**People:**

To pity your sufferings and the sufferings of the world I manage very well, Lord. But to weep for my own sins, that’s another matter. It is so much easier to look upon and bemoan the scars of others.

I’ve found plenty of guilt: in politics, schools, entertainment, slums, industry. I see nominal Christians, who don’t really care, and churches clutched in hypocrisy.

Lord, teach me again that I am a sinner. Give me the strength to hold up the mirror... and see myself as I am.

## **#8 Jesus Falls For A Third Time**

**John 21:17**

The third time he said unto him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.”

**Leader:**

Again. God in the dust. You do not move, for all the soldiers beating. Lord, are you dead? Why doesn’t someone do something? The eyes of eternity see you sprawled upon the ground. But you begin again, just as you are, you stagger on.

**People:**

I too walk to Calvary. Yet, again, there is another path which lures me; an easier path with promise of a good life. I choose this path with money back guarantees, the insurance of financial security, and hopes of “the good life.”

But this time I fall hard. Why do I think that I can work and spend my way into life eternal?

I fall to avoid the cross. The cross scares me. Help me Lord, to bend low again, and put my shoulder under this tree of yours.

## **#9 Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments**

**John 12:24**

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

**Leader:**

You had nothing left but your own cloak; your last possession. But this, too, had to go. Only one thing is needful, Lord, your Cross

Nothing comes between you and the Cross; you are finally united forever. Possessing nothing, yet all creation in yours.