

## What Is Your Cross?

**“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27**

The cross not only saves us, but it continues to sanctify us. Have you read where Jesus said, “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34b)?

Many people think that this means that our “cross” is a sickness, an unsaved spouse, or a cruel boss. However, a cross is not something that is forced upon you, over which you have no choice. A cross is something you willingly take up.

Jesus willingly laid down His life. He calls us to do the same. Your cross is when you willingly die to yourself. You do this by saying no to sin and self, and yes to Christ.



# The Greater Miracle

**“I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no Savior.” Isaiah 43:11**

It takes more of God’s power to save a soul through the cross of Jesus than it does to do any other thing. God had no difficulty creating the universe. The Bible tells us He spoke and it was so. But when God wrote salvation’s story, He went to great difficulty. Let me illustrate.

What if I held a service and had the power to straighten a cripple’s legs or to bring sight to the blind? The next service would be standing room only. Now I certainly want God to heal, but let me tell you something else.

What if I held a service and a little girl walked down the aisle and gave her heart to Jesus? That is a greater miracle than opening the eyes of the blind because the Son of God had to hang on a cross in agony and blood to purchase her salvation! Jesus did not come as a great healer or teacher, He came as a Savior



*Daily Reading*  
*Wednesday, February 1, 2012*

**Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light— 1 Peter 2:9**

Salvation is of the Lord. That is the point of Peter's reminder: you are a *chosen* generation. As Jesus himself affirmed, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16).

And what a salvation you have been chosen to! You are now a *royal* priesthood, a sacred and set apart nation, a distinctive people. The saints in heaven sing praises to the Lamb because he has "made us unto our God kings and priests (Revelation 5:10).

But this wonderful gift of salvation is not, ultimately, man-centered. It is not primarily about us at all. Salvation was planned before creation, executed at the cross, and delivered to you by the Holy Spirit *that ye should show forth the praises* of the God who saved you.

God saved you for your good *and* for his glory. He brought you out of sin, and drew you to himself, and delivered you from hell so that his power and grace and justice and purity would be displayed in your salvation and in your life.

This, then, is the great work of evangelism. Not some artificial salesmanship, but an authentic display of the joy that you have found in Jesus, that others might see and know him through you.



# Skimming the Surface

by Charles R. Swindoll

Read Job 11:1–20

Are you seeking to know the depths of God, or are you just skimming the surface?  
Can you discover the depths of God?  
Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?  
They are high as the heavens, what can you do?  
Deeper than Sheol, what can you know? (Job 11:7–8)

Let me repeat the question: Are you seeking to know the depths of God, or are you just skimming the surface? Only you know the answer. Our current culture is so busy we can become proficient at faking it. We can look like we're going to the depths when, in fact, we're just skating. So you must answer for yourself. Are you seeking to know the depths of God? Or do you find that you're just attending a lot of religious meetings, reading a few religious books, and learning all the religious-sounding language.

One of Larry Crabb's books is titled *The Pressure's Off*. In it he writes,

As a culture, present-day Christianity has redefined spiritual maturity. The reformers knew we were saved to glorify God. We moderns live to be blessed. The mature among us are now thought to be the successful, the happy, the effective people on top of things and doing well . . . We're more attracted to sermons, books, and conferences that reveal the secrets to fulfillment . . . than to spiritual direction that leads us through affliction into the presence of the Father.<sup>1</sup>

*We seem more interested in managing life into a comfortable existence than in letting God spiritually transform us through life's hardships.*

That cuts to the quick, doesn't it? Don't run from the hardship. Don't seek a friend who'll help you get out from under it quickly. Stay there. Stay in it. The Lord God will get you through it. As a result you'll stop skating.

This question is for you to answer: personally, introspectively, truly. Are you seeking to know the depths of God, or are you just skimming the surface?

# Futile Searches

by Charles R. Swindoll

Read Job 10:1–22

Job is still struggling. Eliphaz left him cold. He has received neither comfort nor insight from Bildad. He has no mediator to present his case; therefore, he is very candid. Matter of fact, he's returning to questions he asked earlier. He has every right to ask them. He's confused. He still doesn't get it. So, understandably, he asks:

Why then have You brought me out of the womb?  
Would that I had died and no eye had seen me!  
I should have been as though I had not been,  
Carried from womb to tomb.  
Would he not let my few days alone?  
Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer. (Job 10:18–20)

"Why didn't He just take me from the womb and carry me to the tomb?" Oh, Job, you're back where you started. In fact, as he ends his response, he is back in the doldrums. He writes of his own "gloom" and "deep shadow" and "darkness." Out of respect for Job's private struggle, I suggest we draw all this to a close. This ends sadly, but so it is with Job as Bildad frowns, then walks away. And God stays silent. We end sadly, but not without lessons to remember.

First, *when misery breaks our spirit, philosophical words don't help us cope.* All Job's so-called comforting companions had to offer were hollow words in the form of philosophical meanderings and theoretical concepts. That brought him no relief, no break in his misery. Philosophical words fall flat when they're mouthed to those in misery.

Second, *when a mediator can't be found, futile searches won't give us hope.* We're surrounded by people today on a search for hope to go on . . . to make it through the maze of their misery. Many of them long for a mediator, someone who can represent their cause and plead their case. You may be that person. If so, you can know what Job didn't know. The mediator he longed for is not only alive, He is available and ready to hear your story. Unlike Job's friends, He's no philosopher. He's the Redeemer. His name is Jesus. Anyone who comes to Him for comfort will find it. He has more mercy than you have misery.

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