

# **IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS CLASS 12 and POWER POINT 12:**

## **The Theology of the Cross: THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD:**

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS (TOC) VS. THE THEOLOGY OF GLORY (TOG)

1. EV had heard missionaries have a hard time explaining Jesus to Tribal faiths as “our God is a great warrior.” Sometimes, they respond, “He would not allow himself to be killed like your Jesus.” The TOC cuts against the grain of natural religion, and all of what we expect and want in a spiritual system. God manifests Himself not in abstract principals, but came down from heaven, not as sheer energy, but as a baby. He came in a scandalous way, of a poor virgin, not in a palace, but in a stable. The angels announced his birth, not to royalty, but to shepherds. Throughout His life the Son of God emptied Himself of Glory (Philippians 2:6-8).
2. Jesus was powerful healing the sick and ruling nature itself, but He remained unpopular, scorned and homeless, “The Son of man has no place to lay His head.” Matthew 8:20. Isaiah 53:2-3, “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him, He was despised, rejected by men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, like from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”
3. Strange for the Son of God to come like this. Then how He was arrested tried and executed, nailed to a cross. The prophet continues; “Surely he took upon our infirmities and carried our sorrows, we considered him stricken by God and afflicted, he was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, by his wounds, we are healed...The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all,” Isaiah, 53:4-6. This is an OT not NT chapter. Isaiah foresees how Christ’s weakness impacts our weakness, He carried not only our transgressions and iniquities, but our infirmities and our sorrows.
4. The rest of the story is that He rose, and ascended into the glory that was His. The Nicene Creed states, “He shall come again with glory.” We will live with Him in glory, and thus we will really live happily ever after. Luke 9:23,

“Jesus said, if anyone come after me, he must deny himself, pick up his cross daily and follow me.” Conversely, “Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:27. We don’t have to suffer like Jesus did, much less that any of our meritorious acts or suffering on our part brings redemption. Jesus did that all for us. It does mean that the spiritual life has to do with suffering, defeat and weakness, not simply the experience of glory as we like it.

5. This is a peculiar way that Jesus deals with us. Coming to faith means being broken by the L and coming to grips with our moral failure. Legalistic religions in which one is saved by one’s own efforts are TOG. It assumes optimistically the success and glorifies their power and virtues. When we realize how lost we are, we cling to the cross trusting Christ to do what we can’t do for ourselves, this is saving faith, this is the TOC.

#### BEARING THE CROSS:

6. One of the best TOC books is by Richard Eyer, who was a hospital chaplain ministering to the sick and dying. “In Pastoral Care under the Cross,” He tells of a patient Mr. Wittl who was under kidney dialyses following open heart surgery. Whenever Pastor Eyer would pray for him, Mr. Wittl would follow by making the sign of a cross, a common Lutheran custom.
7. Whenever her daughter would visit him, she would be all bubbles insisting that God would heal him. “But somehow he didn’t seem comforted by this,” Pastor Eyer recalls, and then he turns to me and makes the sign of the cross. The daughter believes enough faith would lead to healing. “There is no place for suffering in her understanding in the will of God.” While she is busy having God surrender to her will, her father has surrendered to God’s will. “He knows that the cross lies at the heart of one’s confidence in God.”
8. As much as Christians want to see the hand of God in nature’s beauty, great sunsets, moving stories of conversion and successful church programs, “It is the cross of Christ & bearing their own crosses that God chooses to reveal His heart to them,” Pastor Eyer recalls. With TOG, “we demand that God justifies himself to us in our suffering by giving us success & healing. We demand a God who does what we want Him to do & reject the cross in how He comes to us. We become fearful of suffering, preoccupied with avoiding it at the expense of truth/faithfulness.”

9. In the hospital patients are helpless, they are dependent on staff, machines and medicines. Many sick hate the thought of being dependent on life supporting equipment, preferring death rather than being “hooked up to some machine.” Our culture draws away from people who are utterly dependent. Those who believe in physician assisted suicide hold that it is better to die than to be dependent and suffer. Those who believe in euthanasia maintain that a life of dependence, weakness and suffering is not worth living, that at some point it is a kindness for those who are sick to be killed.
10. Being helpless and dependent is precisely our spiritual condition. We are helpless to save ourselves. We are dependent upon God totally. Saving faith involves giving up our pretensions of being self-sufficient, strong and in control. Instead we are to rest in utter dependence upon Jesus Christ. “My grace is sufficient for you,” The Lord told St. Paul, “For my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9.
11. It is natural for us to want to save ourselves a spiritual independence and self-sufficiency, so that we can be in control of our spiritual lives. No wonder why we have a fondness for religions of L and the TOG, which allow us to center on our own achievements, merits and accomplishments. We evade our failures by rationalization or dishonesty, but none the less these don’t alter that goal of self-sufficiency. In true Evangelical spirituality, this attitude must be broken, so that we awaken our need and put our trust in Christ rather than ourselves. In the G, our independence is replaced by dependence.
12. It is natural for us to desire independence, self-sufficiency and control our own earthly life. It’s easy to prefer death to dependence, to judge our own worth and those of others in terms of the capacity to do as it were, “good works.” Such attitudes have their value in the secular sphere. However, in the secular sphere even family members are to be dependent upon each other as the members of a society or of an economic system. The attitude of self-sufficiency can not only undermine faith, but can wreck God’s design for human relationships.
13. Just as complacency is shattered by the L, in everyday life such complacency is shattered by the cross---that is failure, frustration, disappointment, difficulties, struggles, and suffering. Both the L and the cross drive us to an ever deeper

and more -intimate dependence upon Christ who meets our sin and our suffering in His cross.