

Stop Carrying Your Cross:

Die on It!

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Please take a moment to think of the songs you know about Christians carrying their cross.

Daily cross-bearing has become deeply embedded in Christian thought.

So where did the concept originate?

Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34 and Luke 9:23 all record Jesus' statement that anyone who desires to come after Him is to deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Him.

Yet in Luke 9:23 we read a word that we do not find in Matthew and Mark. That word is "daily."

Why? Did both Matthew and Mark fail to quote Jesus fully by an omission that Luke avoided? That could not, would not and did not happen in writing divinely inspired scripture.

Did a scribe insert "daily" in the margin of an early copy of a manuscript of the Alexandrian text, a gloss that a later copyist placed in the text?

Biblical scholars are not unanimous on the subject.

In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul affirmed "I die daily." He meant physical death, the danger of being killed any time any day for preaching the gospel. The context makes that very clear.

He wrote the same thing in 2 Corinthians 4:11, "For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Again, in Romans 8:36 (quoting Psalm 44:22) he says "as it is written: 'for your sake we are killed all day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'"

Today many missionaries, especially missionaries to dangerous countries, are urged to "live dead."

Many believers suffer physical handicaps and disabilities. Life situations and obligations come upon believers that they must live with.

Now, if we regard these as crosses that we are divinely appointed to bear, we mistakenly imply that God is their ultimate cause.

Instead, if we consider them as circumstances of life that God sovereignly permits, we remove any mistaken implication of divine causation.

When Paul wrote about his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), he did not call it his cross. He said it was a “messenger of Satan.”

Paul was a man of great faith who expected God to answer his prayers. So after he pleaded with the Lord three times that the situation would leave him, there had to be a reason for it. God gave him the reason and assured him of His all-sufficient grace.

A cross has only one purpose: to kill, put to death. It is decisive, final.

When Jesus said “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross [daily], and follow Me” (Luke 9:23), they all knew exactly what He meant. Jesus was going to be crucified, and if anyone desired to come after Him, he must surrender himself, pick up his own cross, follow Him and be crucified with Him.

Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

The only way to deal with sin is to kill it – put it to death – once and for all – period.

The only way to kill sin is to die to self. Christ or self – which one is first?

The only way to die to self is to be crucified with Christ and risen with Him to new life. Count it done.

Galatians 5:24 says it clearly. “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

If you are a real “born-again” Christian, you have already taken up your cross and followed Christ to your crucifixion with Him.

Romans chapter 6 lays it all out in full detail:

- If we died to sin, we cannot live in sin (verse 2);
- Our water baptism was our full and open identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (verses 3-5);
- Our “old man” – the person we used to be – was crucified with Christ so that the body we used for sinning might be done away with and that we should no longer be slaves of sin (verse 6);
- Because we died, we have been freed from sin (verse 7);
- Daily we count ourselves dead indeed to sin (verse 11);
- We do not allow sin to rule our body and we do not offer the member of our body as tools for sinning but as tools to be used for righteousness for God (verse 13);
- The proof that we are no longer under the old Mosaic law but under grace is that sin no longer has dominion over us (verse 14).

The remainder of Romans 6 expands on this grand theme.

(Special note on Romans 7:13-25. It is psychologically, morally and spiritually impossible to live in both Romans chapter seven, verses 13-25, and in Romans chapter eight at the same time. Chapter six made that clear. In Romans 7:13-25 Paul is personalizing in himself the person who is under the law of Moses, which he used to be, who is constantly struggling in defeat to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law. The last sentence of Romans 7:25 is not the conclusion, only a summary. The conclusion is in Romans chapter eight!)

Romans 8:13 states emphatically, "If you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

This is written to believers. It refers to how we use the members of our body as tools (6:13). (This includes our tongue.) So then, kill sin or sin will kill you! The Holy Spirit will help you.