

CROSSES ARE NOT CONVENIENT

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

The Encyclopedia Britannica calls the cross “the principal symbol of Christianity”. While scholars debate the origin of this symbolism, there is an undeniable association in our modern world with the cross and Christianity. The cross adorns graves, places of worship and is even used in making jewelry. It has become a focal point of controversy as atheists seek to remove crosses from public property. Lost in the debate, however, is the painful truth that crosses were instruments of death. They were especially designed to make death as painful as possible. Please ponder the undeniable fact that those who follow Christ must deny themselves and take up their cross every day!

These words of Christ fly in the face of our modern way of life. “Convenience” is a key concept in advertising, merchandising, and even in worship. “Convenience stores”, for example, blossom and thrive because many are willing to pay a little more just because it is “convenient”. Similarly, “worship services” are usually planned at a convenient time and in a convenient location. If someone dares to challenge our “convenience”, the church down the street will probably make it convenient for us to transfer our membership.

The first use of the word “worship” in the Bible is in Gen. 22:5. Abraham said to his servants: **“Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”** As you recall, this “worship” was anything but convenient. It involved hewing wood for a fire, a three day journey, climbing a mountain, building an altar, and sacrificing a beloved son. Remember! Crosses are not designed to be convenient. If everything in your life is “convenient” perhaps you are missing something important that God wants you to do!. Jesus did not have the privilege of “shopping” for a comfortable cross, and neither do we.

The church in Jerusalem had a track record of doing what was right. They continued steadfastly in the apostle’s teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). Nobody in the church lacked anything for those who owned lands or houses sold them to provide for those needs. They had the favor of all the people and the Lord added to their number daily.

When persecution arose we are told that the church was scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). There were literally thousands of believers uprooted and inconvenienced by this persecution, yet the Scriptures describe it all in a single sentence. Modern historians would write reams of paper focusing on the suffering produced by this persecution. The Scriptures, however, focus on the fact that those who were scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:4).

Peter, who preached at Pentecost, said it like this: **“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.” (1 Peter 4:12-16)**

Felix was the Governor of Judea. He was used to snapping his fingers and having his way. He said to Paul: **“When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” (Acts 24:24)** He never did! No one can follow Christ without taking up a cross, and crosses are not convenient.