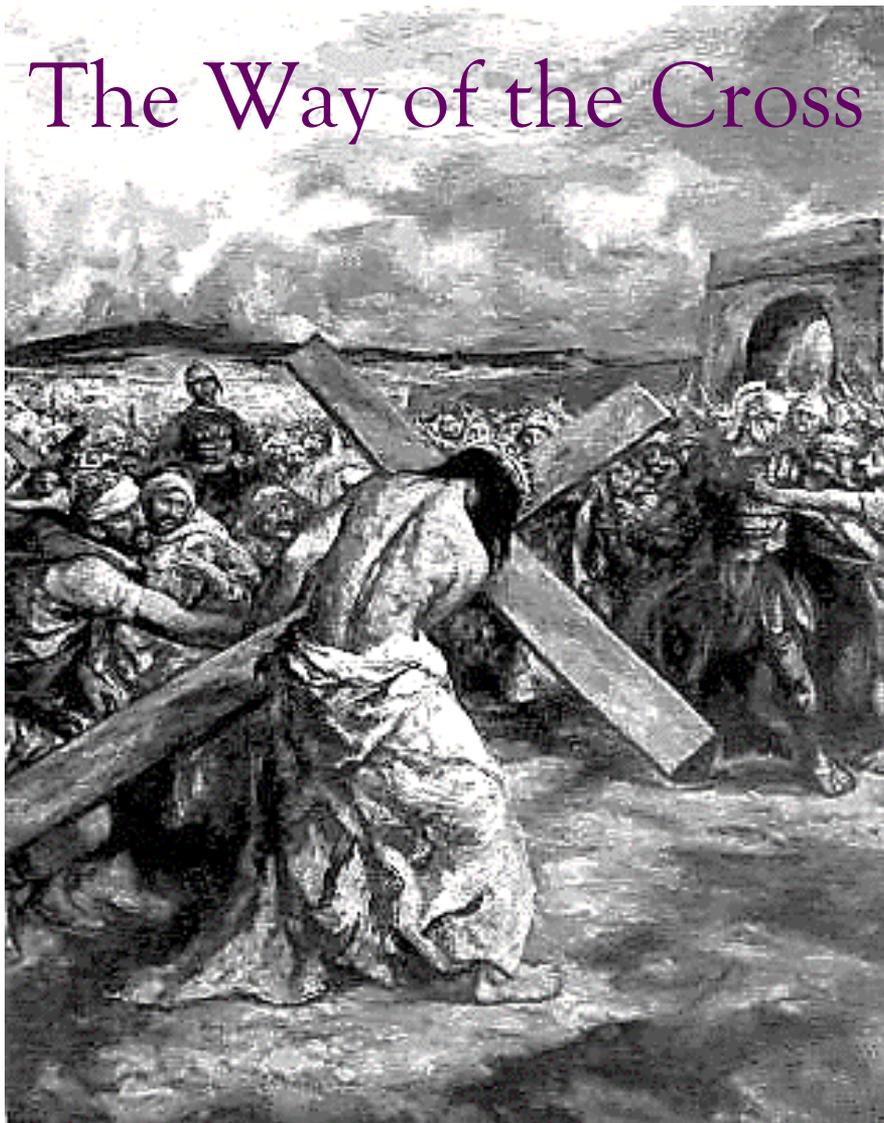


The Way of the Cross



A Theology and Guide to a
Biblical Observance of Lent



Ash Wednesday

Remember, O man, that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return. – Genesis 3:19

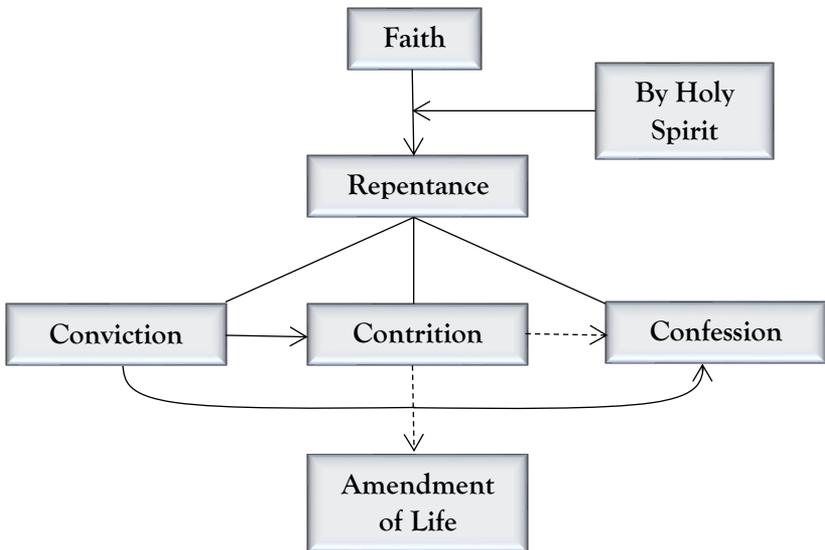
Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. –Joel 2:12-13

- 1) **Ash Wednesday:** Is the beginning of our pilgrimage to the cross. The ashes remind us that we have justly received a **death sentence** for our rebellion against a Holy God. (Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3, Romans 5:14) **In Adam**, we have fallen and by our fallen nature hate God. (Romans 1:30, Romans 5:12-21) In Adam, we are **unrepentant**, refusing to acknowledge God’s law or our just condemnation by it.
 - a. **AND SO...**We begin by remembering who we are in Adam and acknowledging, like the thief on the cross that we justly deserve death for our sin, knowing we have no hope unless God is faithful and provides a Savior for His people
- 2) **In Christ**, we have received forgiveness for sin (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14), been reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), adopted into God’s family as His sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:3-6, Romans 8:12-17), and been made new creations with a new desire through the Holy Spirit to do God’s will (2 Corinthians 5:17-21, 1 John 4:7-11, 19) In Christ, we are led by the Holy Spirit to **continuous repentance** as the new nature in Christ wars against the old nature in Adam, by the work of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 7:22-25)
 - a. **AND SO...**Ash Wednesday is also a call for those separated from the church through **unrepentance** (Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Titus 3:10), to 1) acknowledge their **sinfulness generally** and/or 2) acknowledge some **specific sin** which they have hitherto refused to call a sin or act as though it is one.

- b. **AND SO...**We in the church pray that God will maintain and strengthen us in the faith by which we make the **confession** which marks us as Christ's own; that we are sinners who require a Savior (i.e. continuous repentance). (Romans 10:8-10, 1 John 4:13-15)
 - i. And it is by God's gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-10) that we receive His gifts of **repentance** and the **forgiveness of sins** which mark the Christian as Christ's own. (Luke 24:46-47, 2 Timothy 2:25)
- c. **AND SO...**We in the church also carefully and soberly **examine** our own lives for areas of unrepentant sin.

True Repentance

The Almighty and Merciful God grant you Absolution and Remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of the Holy Spirit. Amen. –Book of Common Prayer 1928



- 1) **Repentance:** In the Greek “metanoian” (i.e. repentance) literally means a change of direction. In the context of the New Testament, repentance means a **change of mind**, whereby our will that is hostile to God’s is changed by the power of the Spirit working through God’s Word and Sacraments. Unlike the popular revivalist teaching, repentance is **not a change of life**, but rather amendment of life is what flows out of our repentance and our status in Christ as a new creation. Thus it is our repentance and not our change of life which marks us as Christ’s own. A repentant Christian will therefore:
 - a. **Sinfulness:** Acknowledge that I am a sinner who deserves God’s wrath. (Psalm 32:5, Romans 5, 1 John 1:8-10)
 - b. **Individual Sins:** Bend the knee of our heart to what God says is right and wrong. For a repentant Christian will say yes and amen to all which God calls sin. (1 John 1:8-10)
 - c. **Savior:** Acknowledge the person and work of Christ as sufficient for Salvation. (Romans 10:8-10)

Steps in Repentance

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.
– John 16:8-11

- 1) **Conviction:** Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would do this for us. (John 16:8-11, Revelation 3:19)
 - a. **Sinfulness:** The Holy Spirit shows us that we are sinners who need a Savior, which non-Christian cannot see because their sin leads them to ignore that truth. (Romans 1:18)
 - b. **Individual Sins:** The Holy Spirit shows us individual sins which we have not called sin because of ignorance or willful disobedience sin before God and our neighbors. (2 Corinthians 12:21, Revelation 2:19-23)
 - c. **AND SO...** We pray for the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sinfulness so that we might never look away from our need for Christ to be our Savior

- d. **AND SO...**We also pray the Holy Spirit to convict us of individual sins, so we are truly repentant in all areas of our lives and are not lead away from faith by them. (1 Timothy 1:18-20)

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. ¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! – 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

- 2) **Contrition:** Non-Christians do not sorrow over sin. They are upset because of the consequences and have some recognition because of the law written on their hearts that what they do is wrong, but their hearts, apart from the work of the Gospel does not recognize their moral bankruptcy before a Good, Just, and Holy God. (Romans 1:18, Romans 2:14-16)
 - a. **AND SO...**We pray for sorrow over our sin, a contrite heart which despises our sin and weeps because our sin tore the flesh from Christ's back, our sin drove the thorns into His brow, our sin plucked the hair from His beard, our sin crushed Him under the weight of the cross, our sin hammered the nails into His hands and His feet, our sin pierced His side, our sin killed our Lord and Maker. (Isaiah 53)
 - i. **New Creation:** Because our heart of stone is now a heart of flesh and as we are sanctified our hatred for our sin and our sorrow for it should grow as we are being made holy. (Ezekiel 36:22-27, Jeremiah 31:31-34, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Hebrews 10:12-16)
 - b. **AND SO...**We look to Christ's suffering and to His cross that we might feel some measure of the appropriate hatred and sorrow for our sin.
 - i. **Necessity of Contrition:** Yet while our contrition flows out of the reality of our new nature in Christ, our feelings of sorrow for sin are not necessary for confession. Rather the Holy Spirit still convicts the mind of sin whether or not the heart is as broken for it as it should be. (Romans 7:22-25)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

– 1 John 1:8-10

And because it is requisite, that no man should come to the holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore, if there be any of you, who by this means [that is, by personal confession of sins] cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel; let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned Minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness. – Book of Common Prayer 1662

- 3) **Confession:** Continuous confession is the mark of a repentant Christian because it acknowledges who we are in Adam, but also expresses our need for a Savior, who is Jesus Christ. (Romans 7:22-25, 1 John 1:8-10, Revelation 3:19)
- a. **AND SO...** We confess corporately and privately that we are sinners and that Christ's perfect life, His propitiatory death, and His glorious resurrection are the sufficient means whereby we are reconciled to God (i.e. declared righteous or justified) (Romans 5:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17-21) and adopted into His eternal family. (Romans 8:12-17, Galatians 4:4-7, Ephesians 1:3-5) And we pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen us and give us courage to be bold in our confession.
 - b. **AND SO...** We also confess individual sins to God and to one another, acknowledging that in this area we bend the knee of our heart to God's Holy Law (i.e. we submit our will to God's will and express our commitment to love Him and our neighbors as we were created to do). And we pray that the Holy Spirit will encourage us in our amendment of life in this area so that, although we are still sinners and are not sanctified by our own efforts, we will strive with the encouragement, wisdom, and strengthening of the Holy Spirit to live a godly life.

- i. **Godly:** Means that our lives reflect the teaching of Scripture in the eyes of those around us.
- c. **AND SO...** We *can* confess corporately and privately to our priest,¹ who is authorized by Christ to give us the assurance that His cross is sufficient payment for those who by faith repent of their sins. This **absolution** is a gift for the conscious of sinners. (Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:18-20, John 20:21-23)

Amendment of Life

- 1) **Amendment of Life:** Repentance (i.e. sharing the mind of God with regard to our sin) is the mark of a Christian, because of the love of God and neighbor given to us as new creations in Christ (i.e. the desire to keep God's Holy Law). Thus we actively desire to conform our lives to God's law of love for Him and our neighbors. Our new desire for obedience flows out of who we are in Christ. Thus we actively strive, when convicted of some area of sin in our life, to conform our lives in that area to God's Law, so that we may live godly lives before those in the church and outside it.
 - a. **AND SO...** We pray for the encouragement, wisdom and strength of the Holy Spirit so to do.
 - b. **AND SO...** We *may* also for a season take up certain disciplines in order to better affect a change in behavior including prayer, fasting, self-denial, Scripture reading, as well as regular confession (also called the sacrament of Penance or Holy Absolution) whereby we receive afresh the sweet words of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins from His priest, for it is that Gospel which is the supernatural power of God both for our justification and our sanctification. (Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25)
- 2) **Sanctification:** We must also remember, however, that our efforts towards amendment of life are not our sanctification, for our sanctification is not accomplished by human effort, but is a gift to

¹ Priest is simply the Latin derivation of the Greek word for "elder" used in the New Testament for those whose calling by God to be a minister of His Word and a pastor to His flock has been recognized by the church. Its use is retained in Anglicanism, as per Article XXXVI, which recognizes the threefold office of ministry.

us who are in Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:12-14) And we are reminded of this in the prayer book which exhorts God in the Office of Public Baptism “To sanctify him with the Holy Ghost”. Also in the Catechism it says, “The Holy Ghost Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.”² Thus true transformation comes by the Spirit and we must wait patiently for His “working in due season.” (Article XVII)

² Just as our righteousness before God was gifted to us by **imputation**, a real holiness before God is gifted to us by **infusion** by the Holy Spirit for those who are in Christ. Richard Hooker notes, “Thus we participate Christ partly by imputation, as when those things which he did and suffered for us are imputed unto us for righteousness; partly by habitual and real infusion, as when grace is inwardly bestowed while we are on earth, and afterwards more fully both our souls and bodies made like unto his in glory.” (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* Book 5, Chapter 56.ii.) and also “The grace whereby God doth incline towards man, the grace of outward instruction, and the grace of inward sanctification, which two work man’s inclination towards God, as the first is the well-spring of all good, and the second the instrument thereof to our good, so that which giveth effect to both in us, who have not cause at all to think ourselves worthy of either, is the gracious and blessed gift of his Holy Spirit. (*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Appendix to Book 5, No. 1).

Lent

- 1) **Movement of Lent:** Thus the movement of Lent is a pilgrimage to the cross.
 - a. **Ash Wednesday:** We remember and acknowledge who we are in Adam.
 - b. **Repentance:** This leads us to acknowledge our sinfulness as well as the individual sins we commit.
 - c. **Holy Week:** Repentance (Conviction, Contrition, and Confession) lead us to recognize the result of our sin. That is the suffering of our precious Lord and Savior upon the hard and bloody wood of a Roman cross.
 - d. **Forgiveness of Sins:** Yet Christ's sufferings lead us naturally to the precious grace of that sweet Gospel of the forgiveness of sins which His gruesome and unfathomable sufferings have wrought for us.
 - e. **Easter:** And with unfeigning gratitude of love for the one who died for us (1 John 4:19), we eagerly go forth in the power of his resurrection proclaiming this sweet forgiveness and awesome power given in the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Observing a Holy Lent

- 1) **Prayer:** Daily private prayer can be an important Lenten discipline. One might also consider daily prayer with a spouse, a friend, or as a family as an additional discipline. This year **OUR CHURCH** is praying daily in Lent for:
 - a. **Repentance:** That God would give us and the other families at New Creation true repentance, a right knowledge of His Gospel, and empowerment by the Spirit us to do the works of service to our neighbors and ministry for the kingdom he has called us to.
 - b. **Empowerment:** Encouragement, strength, and wisdom for Justin as he leads his family and our church as well as for Brooke in her vocations inside and outside her family, particularly as she supports Justin in his calling to ministry.
 - c. **Additional Workers:** Laborers to carry on and expand God's work through New Creation.
 - d. **Proclamation:** Opportunities and boldness to share the Gospel with friend, family, and those we meet.
 - e. **Special Needs:** Personal needs or wants for ourselves as well as those we know and love.
- 2) **Fasting:** This year **OUR CHURCH** is trying to fast on Tuesdays to focus on prayer. This might involve skipping one meal or multiple meals as you feel led. Personal fasting can also involve giving up a type of food such as sweets or meat from one or multiple meals as well as fasting from certain activities.
 - a. **For Instance:** You may decide not to eat meat with two meals each week or watching television.
- 3) **Self-Denial:** This might involve giving up something in order to spend time in prayer or which leads you to a recognized area of sin.
 - a. **For Instance:** If you waste time at work, you may give up those things which lead you away from glorifying God in that vocation.Self-Denial might also involve taking up a discipline.
 - a. **For Instance:** You may do some additional chore to serve your spouse, family, or a neighbor.

- 4) **Reading Scripture:** Daily Scripture reading can be an important Lenten discipline. One might also consider daily scripture reading with a spouse, a friend, or as a family as an additional discipline.
- a. **For Instance:** You may decide to read through a book of the Bible with your family and talk about it each night.
- 5) **Additional Disciplines**
- a. **Stations of the Cross:** Praying through the Stations of the Cross can be an excellent means to focus on our sin and Christ's suffering for it.
 - b. **Morning and Evening Prayer:** You may consider praying through the morning and evening prayer services as a family or with a friend from either the ACNA Texts for Common Prayer, the 1928 Prayer Book, or the 1979 Prayer Book several times throughout Lent. The 1979 Prayer Book includes a shorter Compline service as well.
 - c. **Penitential Self-Examination:** You may consider praying through a penitential self-examination to reflect on your sin. One can be found in the St. Augustine Prayer Book and can be done in one sitting or spaced out over the Lenten season.
 - d. **Lenten Devotions:** You may consider getting a Lenten devotional book to use throughout the season or to read some book which focuses on Christ's cross such as *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Leon Morris), *The Cross of Christ* (John Stott), *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Gerhard O. Forde), *The Hammer of God* (Bo Giertz). In addition you might also watch a movie on the person and work of Christ, such as *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) or *Jesus of Nazareth* (1979)
 - e. **Lenten Retreat:** Take a day (like a Saturday) to devote to prayer, fasting, and Scripture reading either individually, but more beneficial as a family or with friends. This could be done out in nature, at some religious retreat or pilgrimage site, or even at home. It might include:
 - i. Fasting from sun up until sun down.
 - ii. Periods of individual and/or group prayer and bible reading.
 - iii. Saying the Morning or Evening Prayer.
 - iv. Singing Hymn or Spiritual Songs.
 - v. Praying through the Stations of the Cross.



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