

The Pattern and the Point: Cruciformity in the Life (and Death) of a Christian (Part 1)

Introduction

The Text

A. It's been a bit since I've been up here, so at let me at least quickly remind you of a few things before we jump back in and pick things up at [Acts 25](#) . . .

1. Remember, Paul has recently come into Jerusalem.
2. And the Jews there, as you might expect, weren't pleased with him or his message about the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. So they all come out in mass against him.
3. The city dissolves into disarray and he ultimately ends up in the hands of the Roman authorities. He's been passed from one leader to another, from one place to another.
4. Now, in our chapter, he's going to be standing before Festus in Caesarea. Festus is the new governor over Judea appointed to take Felix' place after he'd been recalled by Nero as was alluded to last time.

B. So we pick it up in [v. 1](#) of [ch. 25](#) and we'll read all the way to the bottom of it . . .

¹ Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ² And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, ³ asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way. ⁴ Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. ⁵ “So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.”

⁶ After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. ⁷ When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove. ⁸ Paul argued in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.” ⁹ But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?” ¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” ¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

¹³ Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man left prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵ and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him. ¹⁶ I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. ¹⁷ So when they came

together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought.¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed.¹⁹ Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.²⁰ Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them.²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.”²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” said he, “you will hear him.”

²³ So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.²⁴ And Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.”²⁵ But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him.²⁶ But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write.²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.” (Acts 25:1-27)

Zooming Out

A. There is obviously much we could discuss in this chapter.

1. But, as I mentioned last time, and as you’ve probably noticed by now, there is quite a bit of repetition in these latter chapters of Acts—as Paul moves from trial to trial to trial.

B. And so, rather than recount much of the same things again, I thought this might now be a good time to step back a bit, to zoom the camera out and consider something of the bigger picture we’re seeing play out in this cluster of chapters here.

Why So Much Time and Space?

A. It’s interesting. Many scholars have looked at the comparatively large amount of time and space Luke (the author of Acts) devotes here to this last bit of Paul’s life, with these trials in and around Jerusalem in particular, and wondered: why?

1. Certainly there is so much more Luke could have told us about the missionary journeys, the evangelistic encounters, the miracles and the conversions, etc., etc.
2. Why spend so much time on these seemingly redundant trials—one after the other after the other? With him in chains and all this.

- a. All in all, it takes up about six chapters, nearly 200 verses, almost one-fourth of the book. Again, why?!

B. Well, different answers have been put forward over the years. (And, to be clear, I’m not sure there has to be just one right answer. Many of them have merit and may be true in one sense or another.)

1. Some imagine Luke is here developing an apologetic to his Roman readers concerning Christians.

- a. He's trying to emphasize time and again, look, the Roman authorities tried Christians like Paul and found they were innocent of anything worthy of condemnation or death.
 - i. The tribune there in Jerusalem says it.
 - ii. In our text this morning, Festus says it.
 - iii. As we'll see in the next chapter, Herod Agrippa II is going to say it.
 - b. Perhaps Luke wrote Acts at the time when Christians, as we know, were starting to come under fire in the empire—and I mean that both figuratively and literally.
 - i. And he's saying: "Listen, even your leaders in the past have said let them be, they're not the enemy. Cool off a bit."
 - c. So some imagine this was intended to be an apologetic to the Romans about Christians.
2. But others imagine it moving in the other direction. Maybe Luke is here developing an apologetic to his Christian readers, particularly his Jewish Christian readers, concerning the Romans, the Gentiles.
- a. You've noticed it, right? All through the stories here, the Jews are the ones who are so vehemently opposed to Paul and the gospel.
 - b. Meanwhile it's the Gentiles, the Roman dogs, who are open to it, defending it in some sense, protecting Paul. They are the ones shown in a more favorable light.
 - i. Perhaps Luke highlights this to remind them that the gospel isn't just for the Jews but for the world.
 - ii. Don't lose sight of the grander mission God has set you on.
- C. There are still plenty more theories on this. And, again, many of them have merit, and may be true in some sense. But I, for one, see something even more significant in play here. I think Luke has deeper designs for why he's drawing our attention to these trials and things.
- 1. Why did he spend so much time on all this?
 - 2. Well, I think we get a little closer to the bottom of it when we compare what he writes here in Acts to what he wrote back in his first volume, namely, the Gospel of Luke.
 - a. When we do so, what is so striking to me is the way that Paul and his story here is patterned after Jesus and his story there.
 - i. I've alluded to this from time to time in week's past.
 - ii. But here this morning I really want to bring it out for us in full. I want to show you the many layers to this.

(1) And, when we see that, then I think we'll be ready to really get to the point of it all. What does it mean? Why is Luke telling Paul's story in this way—connecting it to the story of Jesus as he does?

D. So tucked in there are my two headings for this morning's message: (1) The Pattern; and (2) The Point.

(1) The Pattern

Eight Layers

A. If we're really going to see the fullness of the pattern here shared between Paul and Jesus, we've got to look beyond the similarities in their many trials and all this.

1. Truthfully, when you look closely at it, the whole structure of these closing chapters of Acts maps right onto the structure of the closing chapters of Jesus' life as Luke records it for us in his Gospel.

B. So what I want to do first here, albeit somewhat quickly, is bring out the various layers to this pattern as I see it. I've got eight of them for you (though I'm sure there are even more).

1. Just a forewarning: we'll do the majority of our more textual work here and then we'll get to the point and the application of all this for us after that. So stay with me if you can . . .

Layer #1: The Jerusalem Journey

A. I wonder if you noticed that both Paul's and Jesus' closing chapters begin, in a sense, with a God-ordained journey to Jerusalem. That's really the turning point in the narrative for both of them.

B. So with Paul, you remember, Luke recounts for us in [Acts 19:21](#) how "Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem . . ."

C. But this is no novel development. It is simply patterned after his Savior who himself was set on a similar venture at the end by his Father.

1. So you remember Luke tells us in [Luke 9:51](#): "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

a. And the whole story from then on in Luke is told in the context of this journey towards Jerusalem ([Luke 13:22](#); [17:11](#); [18:31](#); [19:11](#), 28).

i. The Savior is heading that way.

ii. And, some twenty or so years later, so is his disciple, his apostle, Paul.

Layer #2: The Fearless Resolve

A. For Paul, you remember, he knows suffering is waiting for him there in Jerusalem, and he has close friends warning him and begging him not to go, and yet he resolves to go anyways!

1. So in Acts 20:22-24, Paul says to the Ephesian Elders: “²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”
 - a. Oh that we would be able to say the same in our day! “Whatever you have for me God, however much it may hurt, you are worth it all!”
 2. When he tells his friends in some of the other churches along the way back to Jerusalem, they are all urging him not to go.
 - a. “Turn around Paul! This sounds terrible. It can’t be God’s will for you to suffer in such a way.”
 - b. To which he responds: “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).
- B. It’s a fearless resolve. But it’s one that’s patterned after that of his Savior who’s gone before him.
1. So in Luke 18:31-33, we read: “³¹ And taking the twelve, he said to them, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.’”
 - a. “It’s going to hurt, brothers. But I’m going anyways.”
 - b. As we saw in Luke 9:51: “he set his face to go to Jerusalem.” It’s a posture of resolution.
 2. And even when, later, Peter, his disciple and friend, famously rebukes him for his talk of the suffering that awaits him there—“Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you” (Matt. 16:22)—Jesus will not veer from his course: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matt. 16:23).

Layer #3: The Unsavory Arrest

- A. As we saw, Paul there in Jerusalem, because of the vitriol of his own countrymen against him, is arrested and dragged off in chains (cf. Acts 21:27-35).
- B. Well, it was the same for Jesus wasn’t it?
 1. His own countrymen, even his own disciple, schemed against him.
 2. And they brought with them those Roman soldiers who helped seize and bind Jesus up there in Gethsemane (cf. Luke 22:47-54).

Layer #4: The Myriad Trials

- A. Now we come to what I referenced back at the beginning: the many trials that both Paul and Jesus had to endure.
1. This is where, intriguingly, even the number of trials corresponds one with the other!
- B. So for Paul, when all is said and done, there will be five trials in total. We've just read of the fourth this morning. And we've seen the fifth already being set up there at the end of our chapter.
1. So there's been an informal trial held before the mob and the Roman official Claudius Lysias ([Acts 22](#)).
 2. Then he stood before the Sanhedrin ([Acts 23](#)). You remember that there things got so heated that they slapped him straight across the face ([v. 2](#)).
 3. Then there was a trial before the Roman governor over Judea, Felix ([Acts 24](#)).
 4. Then, as we saw, he was tried by Felix' replacement, Festus ([Acts 25](#)).
 5. And finally, as a sort of grand finale, Festus will call on the assistance of King Herod Agrippa II and he'll also hear his defense ([Acts 26](#)).
- C. Well, again, all of this seems to be profoundly patterned after that which we've seen of Jesus already in Luke's Gospel.
1. So first he's tried, somewhat informally by Annas ([Luke 22:54](#)). It's there that he too is slapped across the face ([John 18:22](#)).
 2. Then he's brought more officially before the Sanhedrin ([Luke 22:66-71](#)).
 3. Then they bring him before yet another Roman governor over Judea, Pontius Pilate ([Luke 23:1-5](#)).
 4. This governor also will request the assistance of yet another King Herod (Antipas) and so he sends Jesus off to stand before him ([Luke 23:6-12](#)).
 5. But, then at the end, Jesus is brought back before Pilate for one fifth and final go at it ([Luke 23:13-25](#)).
- D. The pattern of Christ in the portrayal of Paul is, again, unmistakable. But it continues . . .

Layer #5: The False Charges

- A. We've seen this clearly with Paul.
1. These Jewish opponents of his took their personal and theological grievances with him and tried to put a political spin on it to get Rome to rule in their favor and act in judgement.
 - a. He's against the law. And he's against the temple.
 - b. But he's also against Caesar (cf. [Acts 25:8](#)).
- B. It was the same with Jesus.
1. On a personal level, they were jealous of him. On a theological level, they claimed he was a blasphemer. He was living contrary to God's law and also was against his temple.

2. But, then, in an effort to spin it politically, they also tried to act like he was a threat to Caesar. After all, wasn't he making himself out to be a king (cf. [Luke 23:1-2](#))?
- C. But it was all false, and the truth kept coming out. Which leads us to the next layer . . .

Layer #6: The Unavoidable Verdict

- A. Here again the parallels are fascinating.
- B. Paul, for one, is (as I shared near the beginning of this message) declared innocent emphatically, on three separate occasions:
1. First by that Roman official Claudius Lysias. In his letter to Felix he writes: ["I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment" \(Acts 23:29\).](#)
 2. The second comes in what Festus tells King Agrippa there in [Acts 25:25](#): ["I found that he had done nothing deserving death."](#)
 3. The third will come later in [Acts 26](#) when Herod himself concludes: ["³¹This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment. ³²\[He\] . . . could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" \(vv. 31-32\).](#)
- C. But it's the same story for Jesus who had gone before him. Do you remember? Three times Pilate declares his innocence:
1. [Luke 23:4](#): ["Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, 'I find no guilt in this man.'"](#)
 2. [Luke 23:14-15](#): ["¹⁴You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him."](#)
 3. [Luke 23:22](#): ["A third time he said to them, ' . . . What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death."](#)

Layer #7: The Relentless Rejection

- A. Nevertheless, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, the people are still relentless in their rejection. If you remember, it's literally the same words shouted in both instances.
- B. So with Paul . . .
1. The mob cries out in [Acts 21:36](#): ["Away with him!"](#)
 2. And later in [Acts 22:22](#): ["Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live" \(cf. 25:24\).](#)
- C. And it's the same for Jesus . . .
1. In [Luke 23:18](#): ["But they all cried out together, 'Away with this man . . .'"](#)
 2. Or as it's recorded for us in [John 19:15](#): ["Away with him, away with him, crucify him!"](#)
- D. But I'd remiss if I didn't point out one last layer to the pattern here . . .

Layer #8: The Ultimate Triumph

- A. For both stories ultimately end, not in tragedy, as we might expect, but in triumph.
- B. So for Jesus, as weak and broken and helpless as he appears, give it three days, and he'd be up from that grave crowned in glory forevermore! He has power over Satan, sin, and death.
- C. And for Paul, though he's in chains, and under guard, even to the last verses of Acts, it's clear there's a strength veiled even under his weakness. Here too is a power over Satan, sin, and death.
 - 1. This triumph is prefigured in the shipwreck of [Acts 27](#), when he's on his way to Rome. Like Jesus, he goes down into the belly of the grave, as it were, and comes out the other side unscathed.
 - a. And, even more, do you remember what he's doing the night before he goes into the water? Well, much like Jesus, he shares a meal with the people around him.
 - i. First he gave them a promise that all would be well.
 - ii. Then Luke tells us: "³⁵ [W]hen he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves" (vv. 35-36). Sound familiar?!
 - 2. And then, after all this drama, when he is finally washed ashore, what is he met with there on the land but a venomous serpent.
 - a. He's snakebit, and the thing is "["hanging from his hand"](#) (Acts 28:4). All the locals there on the island of Malta are sure he's a dead man. Wait till the venom sets in.
 - b. But as Luke tells us: "["He . . . shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm"](#) (v. 5).
 - 3. Beyond all of this, I think this is why Luke ends the book of Acts as he does—telling us that, while Paul was in Rome, even under house arrest, he was at the same time "["proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance"](#) (Acts 28:31).
 - a. Oh it looks like the kingdom of this world was having its way with him.
 - b. Meanwhile, truly it's the kingdom of God that's advancing!
 - i. This will not ultimately end in tragedy but in triumph—because his story is patterned after his Savior's story.

(2) The Point

Cruciformity and the Christian

- A. So, after all of this, what in the world is the point? That's what we've been trying to get to, right?

1. Okay, so maybe Luke spends so much time on Paul's trials and things in the latter chapters of Acts because he's trying to bring out and emphasize the connection with Jesus as he's portrayed in the latter chapters of his Gospel.
2. That's great. We see the pattern. But now . . . what's the point?!

B. Well, I think it's just this:

1. Those who look to Jesus will look like Jesus.
2. The pattern of Christ will mark the people of Christ.
3. His story will become our story.
4. Where he has gone his followers will go.

a. That's the point!

C. This, of course, is true in a general sense.

1. That's why Jesus himself would tell his disciples in [Luke 6:40](#), for example: "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." You're going to start to look like him in general.

D. But, given all we've just looked at, I do believe this is especially true in a particular sense.

1. What I mean here is: we are not just to look like Jesus in general, we are to look like the cross in particular.
 - a. That is the pattern that is especially prominent in the life of Paul here. He's not just saved by the cross of his Savior. He's stamped by it. He looks like it.
 - b. And we ought to look like it as well.

E. I think this is what Paul means in [Phil. 3](#) when he writes: "⁸I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ . . . —¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death . . ." (vv. 8, 10).

1. Do you want to know what the resurrection life of Jesus looks like at work in a person? It looks like death.
2. You know he's alive in me when I'm willing to die for you—when my life, in other words, looks like the cross!

F. It's the same thing he says in [2 Cor. 4](#): "⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (vv. 7-11).

1. The resurrection life of Jesus manifests itself in the self-sacrificial death of the Christian.

- G. That's why Paul would say in [Gal. 6:17](#): "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." And, again, in [1 Cor. 15:31](#), he puts it simply like this: "I die every day!"

Tracing the Pattern

- A. Listen, if you are a Christian in this place (and I say this with fear and trembling, knowing that I fall far short so much of the time) people should be able to trace in yours and my life the very pattern of our Savior and his cross.
1. If you don't look like the cross, it calls into question your very discipleship to him, because, as he says in [Luke 14:27](#): "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."
 - a. To embrace him is to embrace his cross.
 - b. You don't do that, you can't be my disciple Jesus says.
 2. You are either being renewed in his image, "[becoming like him in his death](#)" ([Phil. 3:10](#)), showcasing self-sacrificial love, looking like the cross—or you are an impostor.
 3. If you don't look like the cross you don't know the Christ.
 - a. I'm not saying you're going to be perfectly conformed to his image—Lord knows I'm not.
 - b. I'm just saying that's where we've got to be headed—towards conformity, cruciformity. And if we're not, it's cause for concern.
- B. I'll tell you, it's an interesting thing . . . I along with many others, got excited when people started talking about religious revival among Gen Z in particular. Do you remember this?
1. They're flooding the churches they would say. They're coming to Jesus.
 2. Well, sadly, I've been reading article after article these days that say the statistics simply don't bear this out.
 - a. There's been a "vibe shift" as one article put it. People are more generally supportive of Christianity, they're more okay with the idea of it.
 - b. But there really are no more people in our churches actually doing the real work of discipleship and Christ-following.
 3. I think one article in the [Washington Post](#) really sums it all up well with its title and subtitle.
 - a. Title: "[America Is Undergoing a Vibes Revival.](#)"
 - i. It's a "[vibes revival.](#)" We're more okay with Christianity than we were before. The vibe around it has shifted a bit.
 - ii. But that's about it. It's not a real revival. And the numbers bear that out. Why?
 - b. Subtitle: "[Being Pro-Religion Is Easy. Real Devotion Isn't.](#)"

- i. It's easy to say: "Sure, I'm cool with Christianity. Religion is important to me." And all that.
 - ii. But when it comes down to actually bearing your cross and following him in the thick and thin of everyday life, that's hard. "I didn't say it was that important to me."
- 4. It's a vibes revival, which isn't nothing. But it's not a real revival. Real revival is marked by cruciformity.
 - a. You don't have to be born again to say: "I guess religion is a bit more important to me than it once was."
 - b. But you do have to be born again to say "Jesus is worth it all" as you take up your cross and follow him!
- C. So the first thing we must ask and consider is: Where are you in this? Is this the pattern that's stamped on your life?
 - 1. Is it conformity to Christ and his cross?
 - 2. Or conformity to the pattern of the world (cf. [Rom. 12:1-2](#))?

In the Big and the Small

- A. But then the second thing we must ask and consider is this: if in fact I want to embrace Christ and his cross, to be conformed to such a thing, what does that actually look like in the details of my daily life?
 - 1. I talk in these grand terms about cruciformity and things. And you might think the only way I'm really doing it is if I'm with Paul in prison and persecuted and all this.
 - 2. And, consequently, you might miss how, in reality, this cruciformity plays out in both the big and the small things of life.
 - a. You don't just wait for the big things. "Now I've got to pick up my cross!"
 - b. No. It happens in all the little decisions you make and circumstances you face all the day long.
- B. To help you visualize this for yourself, let me give you just one quick example from my own life this past week.
 - 1. Many of you know we were away on vacation. That's why I wasn't here last Sunday. I heard Joseph did great with his sermon.
 - 2. We were actually in Alaska for a family reunion on my side. My sister lives in a little town outside Anchorage. It was amazing. We were able to do so much, tour all around, because the sun never sets. So the kids are up at 11:30pm but it still looks like it's the afternoon out there and we're like: what are we doing?! We hiked on glaciers, went whale-watching, berry-picking, fishing, all the stuff.
 - 3. But when the family reunion was finished, one of the things my immediate family did is we decided to stay a couple days longer and go up to Denali National Park and tromp around in

the wilderness there. It's the furthest north I've ever been, just 200 miles south of the Arctic Circle. There's caribou and moose and grizzly bear and Dall sheep and wolves roaming free. It's an incredible place.

4. And if you want to go deeper into the wilderness, you have to book these green transit buses months in advance and they'll take you many miles in where no other cars can go. And you can literally get off anywhere and just hike in the backwoods. No trails. Just the wild.
 5. And if you know anything about me, you know, I love this. I get out into the wild and it makes me a little wild. So I'm pumped.
 6. I've got everything planned and ready. But then we finally get to the day where it's our turn to get on the buses and it's cold and it's rainy.
 7. And we're out there, we still see a lot of things along the drive, but no one in my family wants to get off and hike. And I'm dying inside. I've been planning this for months. Looking forward to it. And now we're finally here, and we may never make it back again, and no one wants to get out and adventure with me.
 8. So I'm ready to throw a pity party right there in the bus. Poor little nicky isn't getting what he wants. I'm tempted to whine and pout.
 9. But then I remember this sermon I'd been preparing. And a question is suddenly pressed on me, whether I was ready for it or not: What would the cross look like here in this situation?
 - a. Well, I'll tell you what it wouldn't look like: a pity party, pressuring my family to get what I want, sacrificing them for my agenda. No.
 - b. Here's what it looks like: Laying down my life for God and others. Which, in this case (it seems so small, but it felt big to me), it means I don't make my family feel bad for not wanting to hike in the freezing rain with wild animals who want to eat us (of course they don't!). That's okay. I can let go of my stuff, my desires, for them.
 - i. I'm not sacrificing you for me. I'm sacrificing myself for you.
 - ii. But the only way I can do that is if lean in on Jesus' sacrifice and his resurrection power now available to me in the Spirit.
 10. So that's what I tried to do, however imperfectly.
- C. So I don't know what cruciformity might look like for you in the details of your life right now. Maybe it's something big. Maybe it's something small. But I'd invite you to consider it, even this afternoon, as you go about your day, facing various decisions and things.
1. Instead of asking: what do I want, what do I need, what can I get, and so forth—as we are prone to do;
 2. ask this: what would the cross look like here in this situation?
 - a. In this conflict?
 - b. In this traffic jam?
 - c. With this financial decision I have to make?
 - d. With this person who's bugging me at work?
 - e. When my wife wants to watch this show but I want to watch that one.
 - i. In the big things and the little things of life.

3. What would cruciformity look like?
 - a. I'm not saying we'll always know the answer for sure.
 - b. But that's always the right question.
 - i. Because that's why we're here: to know Jesus; to show Jesus; to be conformed to his image; to reflect him and the wonder of his cross to the world around.
- D. I'll come back next time and we'll try to tease out more of the particulars of the cruciform life. But hopefully this morning was enough to get you started.
 1. May Jesus, our crucified and resurrected Savior, help us along!