

I. Introduction

A. The hope of Easter-

I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. I Cor 15:1

B. Our personal cross that Jesus invited us to take up -

He said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? Lk 9:23

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Gal 2:20

C. In 2023 the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing-

For the word of the cross is folly(foolishness) to those who are perishing. I Cor 1:18

Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. II Cor 4:3

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Mat 7:13

In the general population 67% of responders claim to be Christians but only 2% qualify as followers of Jesus by their worldview and practices.

Am I heaven ready?

<https://crossroads-ridgecrest.org/brochures-guides>

https://cdn.subsplash.com/documents/74GPWZ/_source/765974d3-6dda-4181-a64a-775b53324daa/document.pdf

II. The cross of Christ is firmly planted in the history of our world-

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God! Jn 20:27

"Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence." President John Adams

I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD Jer 29:11

III. The cross in the life follower of Jesus-

Lies we tell ourselves-

- I will go to heaven because I believe in God.
- I will go to heaven because God loves me and won't send me to hell.
- God will allow me into heaven because I have done good things for Him and others, so I deserve to go to heaven.
- I will go to heaven because at one time in my life I prayed and asked God to forgive me and come into my heart.
- I will go to heaven because Jesus died for all sins so mine is covered .

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. I Jn 1:8 &10

A. Without Christ we are dead in our sins-

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Eph 2:1

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Isa 59:1

B. We can't work, think or deny our way to holiness and heaven

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. Rom 3:20

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Rom 4:4

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Ps 51:16

C. Jesus is the way to know God-

1. By God's grace and love-

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Eph 2:8

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Rom 3:22

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Jn 19:28

Propitiation; an expiatory sacrifice, a expiatory victim

"It is finished"; *Tetelestai, to accomplish, to end, pain in full*

the perfect tense speaks of an action which has been completed in the past with results continuing into the present

2. Removing the sin barrier between us and God-

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls I Pet 2:24

You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Col 2:13

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mat 4:7

Repent; *Metanoēō*. to change one's mind, go in a different direction.

to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins

3. The new life in Christ-

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. II Cor 5:17

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. I Pet 1:14

D. Taking up the cross daily in the life of a Christian-

He said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? Lk 9:23

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. Jn 15:5

As for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. Lk 8:15

1. Abiding in His word-

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. I Pet 2:1

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Heb 4:12

This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." Jn 3:19

2. Praying in repentance-

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting! Ps 139:23

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Ps 119:10

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. Ps 1:1

3. Putting on the life and nature of Jesus-

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. I Jn 3:8

If we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? Heb 10:26

Repent; Metanoēō. to change one's mind, go in a different direction.

to heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past and present sins