

Weekly Newsletter: 30 September 2025

Reflection: Never Further than the Cross

By Joe Barnard

*Never further than the cross,
Never higher than thy feet!
Here earth's precious things seem dross,
Here earth's bitter things grow sweet.*

These four lines could change your week; these four lines could change your life.

Let's start with the first line. What does it mean? In one sense, at least historically, the cross is behind us. The event of Jesus' death happened two thousand years ago. What is the hymn writer suggesting? What does it mean to stake one's ground permanently at the cross and to refuse to move beyond it?

A lot of religions are built on the metaphor of ascent. The goal of a devotee is to climb progressively from one degree of self-renunciation to another, or from one stage of perfection to another. If Christianity was reduced to this trite formula, the cross would be stage-one of a multi-stage journey. We would visit the cross, perhaps benefit by way of purification and illumination, and then pack up and leave. We would graduate from the cross in the same way that a student graduates from algebra and moves onto trigonometry.

But Christianity does not match the shrunken form of man-made religion. The cross is not just the site of initiation; it is the place of strengthening, worship, and transformation. The Christian can no more advance beyond the cross than the body can outgrow its need for air, sunlight, and food. At the cross we see the clearest revelation of God available to mortal eyes; at the cross we drink of the fountain of divine love; at the cross we find a holy fire that purges our deepest passions. There is no place beyond the cross because the cross is the landing place of human worship. To pass beyond the cross could only result in loss, not gain. It would be death, not life.

Now the second line. Human beings love to climb ladders. The human ego loves to get as high as it can so that it can turn in contempt and look down on those beneath it. This is the evil of pride. *I* want to be above *you* so that *I* can act as if I am better than *you*. It's an ugly truth, but a universal one.

There is only one thing that is potent enough to kill pride, *the cross*. When we see the Son of God nailed to an elevated plank of wood something changes in the heart. We realise that there is only one human being who deserves to be lifted high, and he is Jesus. Suddenly, we come to see that the most fulfilling place in

the universe is not to be above, but to be below. To be at the feet of Jesus, to lay hold of them and drench them with our contrite tears, is the only true position we could ever take. Humility is honour. If the Son of God was willing to take flesh to wash our feet, how could we aspire to anything other than to bend the knee and worship at his feet.

The third line. In Philippians 3 Paul speaks of a strange algorithm whereby “losses” become “gains” and “gains”, “losses”. That algorithm is the cross. We might liken the cross to the magnifying glass of a jeweller that is able to distinguish real diamonds from fake ones. When you see riches, acclaim, or power through the lens of the cross, false appearances are stripped away. What we once took for precious gems is seen to be cheap plastic. Henceforth we can put such trinkets in the bin, recognising them for what they are- rubbish.

The final line. Let’s ask a hard question: Can suffering be sweet? Can persecution be blessed? Can death be without a sting? Can sickness bring joy? The answer to all of these questions is yes, but only if we embrace the unique power of the cross. It is only the cross that enables fellowship in suffering, joy in persecution, renewal in dying, and vitality in sickness. How does the cross do this? The answer is Jesus. To visit the cross is to meet with Jesus himself, and it is the actual grace that flows from his person that fills the empty heart with a fullness that is nothing less than the very love of God himself.

Here is a challenge for the week. Memorise four lines of an old hymn. More than exercising the memory, the words will refresh the heart.

This Wednesday

We’re having a meal together on Wednesday evening before the prayer meeting. Thank you to Chrissie and David for cooking for us!

Come from 5.45pm and dinner will be served at 6pm. We’ll meet to pray from 7-8pm and are looking forward to having Fiona Christie from Edinburgh City Mission come along and share with us.

Scottish Women’s Bible Convention



This Saturday over 300 women will gather at Charlotte Chapel for the Scottish Women’s Bible Convention. It promises to be a wonderful day of teaching and fellowship, come along if you’re free!

Käete Wiese will be teaching on the theme of *Whole Life Love* from Deuteronomy 6. There will also be seminar options, a bookstall from 10 of those and the chance to catch up with lots of other women.

Speak to Liz for more details and tickets are available here - <https://brushfire.com/swbc/swbc2025/588468>

Christina Ronaldson

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Christina Ronaldson last week. Christina was a longtime member of Holyrood but she hadn't been able to attend for a number of years because of her health. Please pray for Christina's brother, Ed, and the family. We'll keep you updated when we know funeral details.

Student Lunches

We're looking forward to welcoming some students this month and next. The Mission Team have arranged for couples or families to offer hospitality after our Sunday morning services to any students. Here are the details of who is hosting and please point students in the right direction –

- 5 October: the Barnards
- 12 October: Nick and Jean Archer
- 19 October: the Scotts

East of Scotland Gospel Partnership – Sunday 26 October



Save the date! As a church we are part of the East of Scotland Gospel Partnership and one of the aims of the partnership is to express unity by coming together for a yearly Gospel Partnership evening service. This will take place on **Sunday 26 October at 7pm at Charlotte Chapel.**

There will be no evening service at Holyrood and we look forward to attending the joint service instead.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Meal from 5.45pm and the Prayer Meeting at 7pm (with an online option)
- Thursday: Women's Bible Studies from 10.30 – 11.30am in the church
- Sunday:
 - Morning service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Student lunches in family homes
 - Evening service at 6pm – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddler Group: 10am – 11.30am



www.holyroodevangelical.org

Incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Scottish Charity Number SCO44820