



Love Worth Finding offers this 12-day challenge as an Easter advent challenge. Devotions are drawn from sermons delivered by Pastor Adrian Rogers and are designed to enable us to go deeper in our understanding of Jesus' unfathomable sacrifice on the Hill of Golgotha. Plan to spend some time each day thinking about the price He paid for salvation. If you can, keep a journal of your thoughts and discoveries or use the journal as a prayer of gratitude back to God.





DAY ONE

THE CUP OF POLLUTION

SIN'S OIL PRESS

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

The word *Gethsemane* literally means “oil press.” In this garden there was a giant press to squeeze the olive oil from the olives. It was here Jesus prayed three times, “Lord, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me” (Matthew 26:39). I don’t want to drink this cup—to experience this cup fully, to take it into my very being. It was the cup of agony that Jesus drank in dark Gethsemane and He drank it there alone. The pollution of sin was in that cup. Take all the sin of the past and all the sin of the future, distill it, put it in this cup. Put rape in there. Put sodomy in there. Put child abuse in there. Put Hitler’s gas ovens in there. Put murder in there. Put blasphemy in there. Put witchcraft in there. Put filth in there and say, Jesus, drink it. Drink it. Drink the bitter dregs, become sin. Not just bear sin but become sin. For us.

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Jesus died for your sin. Have you accepted His bountiful cup of grace, experienced it fully, taken it into your very being? Journal a prayer thanking Him for drinking the poisonous cup of sin—past, present, and future—pressed from the shortcomings of your life.



DAY TWO

THE CUP OF PUNISHMENT

INCOMPREHENSIBLE SEPARATION

READ ISAIAH 59:2

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

When Jesus prayed at Gethsemane, He was not merely contemplating the pain of intense scourging, the loathsome walk to the cross, and the agony of Golgotha. Jesus knew that He was going to suffer the very fires of hell. Jesus was going to baptize His soul in hell. Jesus was going to walk the burning halls of the damned. Jesus was going to receive the thunderbolts of God’s wrath, and Jesus Christ, the eternal Son who had been in the bosom of the Father from eternity was going to be now separated from God on that cross. He was going to cry out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?” (See Matthew 27:46.) The answer is that the chief attribute of God is not love; it is holiness. And in His holiness, He has sworn sin will be punished. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and God the Father had to turn His back on God the Son.

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Have you ever seen a little child do something wrong and hide from his parents afterward? Even small children understand that “sin separates.” Run to Gethsemane and fall on your knees. Meet the suffering Servant. He endured incomprehensible separation in order to be reunited with you. Write about what it means to be reunited with God.



DAY THREE

THE CUP OF COMMUNION

VICTORY AT GETHSEMANE

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:25

“...He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

Scholars tell us that in Jesus’ time, when animal sacrifices were made on the temple mount, the blood would run down into the Kidron brook in the Kidron Valley. When Jesus left the upper room and crossed the valley to go to Gethsemane to pray, He had to cross that brook running crimson with blood. Surely it must have reminded the Lord Jesus that soon His blood would flow in that same spot on Moriah. Indeed, it began flowing in the garden as He prayed with such intensity that He bled. And in that singular moment at Gethsemane, when He reaffirmed, “...not My will but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42), He made a way to bind us together in sweet communion for eternity. Before those nails ever went into the hands of Jesus, they had already come into His soul. Gethsemane was the doorway of Calvary. The victory really was won in Gethsemane, not on Calvary. Victory was paid for at Calvary, but it was won in Gethsemane.

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Because Jesus drank the cup of sin’s pollution, the cup of sin’s punishment, which is separation from God, we drink the cup of communion. He takes our sin. He drinks it down. We take His righteousness. We drink it in. God forbid that we should fail to be moved by Gethsemane. Write about any new insights you have into the work of salvation in the Garden of Gethsemane.



DAY FOUR

THE CROWN OF MYSTERY

PERFECTION BORE SIN'S CURSE

READ GENESIS 3:17-18

"...Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you..."

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

In the Garden of Eden, there were no thorns, no thistles, and no brambles. The first rose that ever bloomed was without thorns. When sin was introduced through Adam and Eve, thorns and thistles began to grow on planet Earth. The thorns Jesus wore on His head before His crucifixion speak of the hardship, sorrow, and death that come with sin. The thorny pathway we all walk is because of sin. The bed of briars we sleep on is because of sin. Do you want to know why we have confusion, frustration, and suffering? Look at every hospital and say, "Sin did this." Look at every mental institution and say, "Sin did this." Look at every jail and say, "Sin did this." Look at every twisted and warped body and say, "Sin did this." Look at heartache, pain, toil and anguish, and you can write over it one word: SIN. The thorn is the symbol of that sin. When Jesus died on the cross He was crowned with thorns. He wore the crown because He bore the curse.

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Pray for those who are suffering, remembering in your prayer that even the suffering "good" people endure comes from the curse of sin in the world. Look forward to the day when Jesus Christ will return and bring a final end to all sin and suffering because in His perfection, He wore the crown of thorns and bore sin's curse. Write today about the things in your life and the lives of those you love that will be perfected in Heaven where there is no sin.



DAY FIVE

THE CROWN OF MISERY

RESCUING HIS BELOVED

READ ISAIAH 52:14

“...So His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men...”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

Some years ago in New York City, there was a mother who was hanging out her clothes. A neighbor came screaming, “Your house is on fire!” The mother dropped her clothes and ran into the raging inferno to the crib where her little girl was. She wrapped her baby in a blanket and laid her upon the grass as the house was consumed. That mother’s face took the heat of those flames and was horribly scarred. Her hands were burned and gnarled. But the little baby was not touched at all by that fire. The little girl grew up to be a beautiful girl and when she was 18 her high school class held senior day on the Hudson River. This girl, so lovely she could have worn the crown of a beauty queen, was the center of attention. At a certain moment, this girl’s mother passed by, and one of the high school girls asked, “Who is that hideous woman?” And her own daughter said, “I don’t know who she is.”

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Once the mother revealed to her daughter the account of how she had become disfigured, the mother-daughter story concluded with reconciliation. Will your story have the same ending? The crown of thorns was placed on Jesus’ temple, one of the most sensitive parts of the body. Then they battered the head of the Lord Jesus Christ until His face was so brutalized you could not tell whether it was the face of a man or an animal. Look now upon His face. Let your heart be pricked by His crown of thorns. Recognize that He allowed Himself to be disfigured so you could be made eternally beautiful and wear the crown of the redeemed. God has revealed Himself to you through Jesus Christ. Will you be reconciled to Him? Journal a prayer telling Jesus about the beauty you see in Him.



DAY SIX

THE CROWN OF SAVING MINISTRY

ONE-SIZE ONLY

READ GENESIS 22:8

“My son, God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

Centuries before Jesus Christ was born, God said to Abraham, I want you to take your son that you love to a place I will show you, and there you are to offer your son. So, they went to Mt. Moriah, which later became the Temple Mount; it's all the same limestone ridge as Calvary. Isaac looked around and he said, “Father, here's the wood and the fire for the sacrifice. We've got the rope and the knife. Father, where's the lamb?” Abraham choked back the tears. “You must trust me, my son. I don't understand. I don't know why. But son, you're the sacrifice. Put out your hands; I must tie you.” And that son, strong and strapping, who could have overcome his elderly father, submitted and became a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He stretched himself out there on the altar. Abraham lifted that gleaming knife and heard a voice. “Abraham, Abraham, don't harm the lad. I have provided a substitute.” Abraham immediately discovered “a ram caught in a thicket.” The Hebrew word means a thicket of thorns. His head was caught in the brambles...in the thorns. Here on Mt. Moriah, God had preached the Gospel to Abraham. (See Genesis 22.)

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God has sworn by His holiness that all sin will be punished. There's only one question: who will bear that punishment, you or Jesus? You, or the only One worthy to wear the tailor-made crown of thorns? Write in your journal what it means to you that God provided Himself (in the person of Jesus Christ) as the substitute for you at Calvary.



DAY SEVEN

THE CROSS

CROSSROADS OF SUBSTITUTION

READ JOHN 2:29

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

All through the Bible, God has been teaching the lesson of substitution. He has been talking to people about a lamb without blemish to be sacrificed to take away sin. By the time of Christ, the priests and the Levites have instructed a special rank of shepherds to grow spotless lambs. They are grown in Bethlehem. On Palm Sunday, those lambs are going up to the Temple Mount. The same day, riding upon a donkey, comes the Lord Jesus Christ. The Passover lambs and God’s Lamb enter into the city the same day. The priests and the Levites examine the lambs. They look inside the mouths, go through the fleece, the hooves...the eyes; even the eyelids are examined. If there is any flaw, the lamb is not worthy for sacrifice. Jesus is another Lamb born in Bethlehem. Mary’s little lamb, whose fleece is white as snow. He is the virgin-born Son of God. He too is examined...by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodian, and the civil leaders. He is pronounced sinless. Then comes the climax: at 3:00 in the afternoon, the priest tilts the head of the little spotless lamb and uses a lethal knife; at that very moment on cruel Golgotha, God’s Lamb pours out His royal blood for the sin of mankind. And Jesus says from the cross, “It is finished. It is paid in full” (John 19:30).

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The Lord Himself invites you to place your hands on that perfect, spotless Lamb and say, “Jesus, You are my substitute. Forgive my sin and take full control of my life. Thank You for saving me.” Write in your journal your commitment today to surrender to Jesus’ control of every part of your life.



DAY EIGHT

THE CROSS

ONCE AND FOR ALL

READ 1 PETER 3:18

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

In Rome, when a man would be judged guilty of a crime, he would be put in prison. A certificate of debt would be placed on his prison door. After he had served his time and paid the penalty for his crime and had satisfied the demands of the law, a word would be written across the certificate of debt. The word was *tetelestai*, which means, literally, “it is finished” or “it is paid in full.” Because this debt to society was paid, it meant that the man would never have to come into double jeopardy; he’d never be judged for that crime again. It is the same for you and me. If you belong to Jesus Christ, that is, if you have accepted the payment He made for sin on the cross and acknowledged that He is Lord of your life, you are “saved.” Your debt is *tetelestai*. You cannot get lost after you are saved, because if you could (which you can’t), Jesus would have to die again to save you.

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When Jesus said, “It is finished,” we can take Him at His word. If you know that you gave your life to Him, determine today that you will never again wonder whether Jesus has the power to forgive all of your sin, past, present, and future that He might bring you to God. Write about what it means to you to be debt-free.



DAY NINE

THE CROSS

WARNING: FOR MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY

READ JOHN 10:28

“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint, the tragedy that was called Calvary and the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Romans used crucifixion to inspire stark terror. Anybody who saw crucifixion said, “Romans, whatever you tell me to do, I’ll do it. Just don’t crucify me.” Our word *excruciating* comes from the Latin word *excruciat*, which means “torment greatly,” or, in some translations, “out of the crucified.” When the executioners nailed the victim’s hand to the cross, they would separate the metacarpals and place the nail, not in the palm, but in the wrist. They would try to hit the median nerve to send pain up the body and into the torso. Jesus would have been crucified with his hands at a 90-degree angle, but when the body falls, it goes down to a 65-degree angle. The weight of the body comes down on the chest and leaves the crucified person gasping for breath. In order to breathe, he must lift himself up, but as he does, he must push down on the nails that are in his feet. So, he is between gasping for breath and searing with pain.

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On the cross, Jesus took Holy God with one hand, sinful man with the other hand, and by the blood of His cross reconciled God to man. He took us by the hand and presented us to God the Father. He said, “Father, these are Mine. I purchase them with My blood.” Have you taken His hand? Envision your hand in the nail-scarred hand and write about what it means to you that Jesus took the weight of your sin to the cross.



DAY TEN

THE CONQUEST

STANDING IN RESURRECTION POWER

READ PSALM 188:22-23

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

According to Jewish tradition, the stone specifically designed to be the cornerstone for Solomon’s temple was created and sent to the worksite at what is now the Temple Mount during the early days of construction about 970 B.C. The story goes that builders kept stumbling into the stone as they worked on less essential portions of the project. The stone was moved to the side and finally fell over into the valley below. When the time came to lay the rejected cornerstone, it had to be “resurrected” from the brush in the Kidron Valley to anchor the great temple. Fast-forward about a thousand years to the time of the early church and Peter tells the Jewish rulers that the power of the resurrected Jesus Christ is responsible for miraculous healings and for the boldness the disciples have in sharing their faith. “This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders (of religion). It has become the cornerstone,” Peter tells them in Acts 4:11.

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If you have not yet met the Cornerstone, you will stumble in your quest for spiritual understanding and you will miss out on the Truth that would anchor your life now and eternally. If you already know Jesus, are you standing strong in His resurrection power as you share your faith with others? Write today about what God is telling you about sharing your faith.



DAY ELEVEN

THE CONQUEST

STANDING FIRM IN THE BATTLE

READ ACTS 26:15-16

“So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness...’”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

Webster’s defines *persecution* as “hostility or ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs.” In the case of Christian persecution, this hostility is aimed at the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever asked why? The world today loves the baby Jesus. They don’t persecute Him because He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. They don’t persecute Jesus because of His teachings, or because He healed the sick and fed the multitudes. The Jesus the world persecutes is the One who came to destroy the works of the devil, the Jesus who is against rape, murder, greed, pride, abortion, sodomy, and racial hatred. Now when we come to know Jesus, we stop persecuting Him. But let’s put it down big, plain, and straight: when you stand for Jesus, as He calls you to stand, this world is going to come down on you like a hammer. All of the artillery of Hell is going to be aimed at you just like it was aimed at the Lord Jesus Christ. If there’s no persecution, don’t get the idea that the world has gotten more “churchy;” it’s because the church has gotten more worldly.

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If you belong to Jesus and you’re not being persecuted in any way, be prepared, for the Bible says that all those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. If you are in a battle, take to heart these words in 1 Peter 5:9: “Resist him [the Evil One], steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” Journal about the battle you are in and the weapons of warfare you have at your disposal.



DAY TWELVE

THE CONQUEST

STANDING IN HOLY BOLDNESS

READ ACTS 4:19-20

“But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’”

CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS

The religious leaders told Peter and John “you can’t preach a risen Lord.” They didn’t want this message out because of the power of the message. A story is told that one demon said to another: “If those liberal theologians ever really let Jesus out of the grave, Hell help us because all Heaven will break loose!” That’s true! You might as well have told the sun not to shine as to tell Peter and John they could not preach a risen Christ. They had seen Him! They knew He was alive. You could not shut them up. They had no church building and yet they turned their world upside down and inside out for Jesus. You know what we need today? We need an epidemic of holy boldness. It’s not arrogance, self-confidence, human courage, or presumption. It’s a boldness that comes from spending time in the presence of the living Lord Jesus Christ. His presence compels us. We cannot but speak.

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Have you met the risen Christ? If not, He is ready to make all Heaven break loose in your life! If you know Him, are you infected with holy boldness; do you need to spend more time in His presence to catch the fever? Write today about any directions you are receiving through scripture and prayer about areas in which you need to demonstrate “holy boldness.”