The Cross should not be relegated to an event that accomplishes our salvation as an isolated or unique transaction. The Crucified Christ reveals the very nature and character of God and the nature and character of the life of salvation. The Christian life is the process of increasing transformation into the image and likeness of Christ. That image and likeness is specifically that of the Crucified (Phil. 2:5-11).

We are told to keep the commandments. Those commandments include care for the poor, the homeless, those in prison, etc. Indeed, the Cross teaches us to radically identify with them, rather than simply to offer a helping hand. Our concern for justice all too rarely engages anyone face to face, nor does it leave us with substantially less money. We fail to understand the true nature of violence, and refuse to acknowledge its inherent role in “making the world a better place.”

Modernity is married to violence and pleads that it is all in a good cause. “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” This is our personal kenosis - an emptying in the presence of the Living God is overthrown!

To understand the true nature of violence, and refuse to acknowledge its inherent role in “making the world a better place.”

Those who have reduced the Cross to a pagan sacrifice, appeasing an idol God, are not recognizing the Cross. "In arguments with modernity, the way of the Cross will quickly reveal itself. The first moment that the giving of thanks becomes difficult, we have reached the wood of the Cross itself. The giving of thanks is beside the point. Those who have reduced the Cross to a pagan sacrifice, appeasing an idol God, are not recognizing the Cross."

However, if the preaching of the Cross carries with it no foolishness, then something less than the Cross is being preached. Those who have reduced the Cross to a pagan sacrifice, appeasing an idol God, have made of it a wise investment and a safe bet. Such "faith" is beside the point.

Within our daily lives, if we confront the day with thanksgiving, the Cross will quickly reveal itself. The first moment that the giving of thanks becomes difficult, we have reached the wood of the Cross itself. We stand in the very gates of Hades. If, in that moment of difficulty, we look away, the thanks becomes difficult, we have reached the wood of the Cross itself.

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are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Luke 16:19-31 (Gospel)
There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’ Then he said, ‘I beg you, therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

A Cruciform Providence
By Fr. Stephen Freeman

The entire mystery of the economy of our salvation consists in the self-emptying and abasement of the Son of God — St. Cyril of Alexandria

Trust in the providence of God is much more than a general theory of how things are arranged in our lives and in the world. We tend to discuss the notion in the abstract, wondering whether this action or event is to be properly attributed to God. There is a much deeper matter, however, one that goes to the heart of the Christian life and the nature of salvation itself. Providence is not a theory about how things are — it is the very nature of salvation.

A proper place to begin in thinking about this is with Christ Himself. Jesus says, “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” (Joh 6:38) This is a clear declaration of His self-emptying and abasement, a kenotic action that is consummated on the Cross.

In a similar manner, trust in Divine providence is a form of self-emptying on the part of the believer. Such trust has a very traditional expression: the giving of thanks. To give thanks always, everywhere and for all things is the fullest form of self-emptying. The Elder Sophrony once said that if one were to practice thanksgiving always and everywhere, he would fulfill the saying to St. Silouan, “Keep your mind in hell and despair not.” Fr. Alexander Schmemann said, “Anyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation.”

The common objection to trust in God’s providence is similar to the objections for thanksgiving. We fear that such trust and thanks will result in non-action, an acquiescence to the reign of evil. If the Christian life is rightly understood (and lived), this result is not an issue. This fear, understandably common, is intensified within the mindset and narrative of modernity.

The modern narrative tends to claim that human problems were largely left unattended and uncorrected until the advent of modern social science and political efforts. It fails to recognize that the very period of time that is marked by “modern,” has also contained many of the most egregious human rights violations known to history. Racial slavery, as practiced in America, for example, was maintained and justified almost exclusively on the grounds of very modern reasons.

The fear of inaction is a charge that can easily be brought against the Cross itself. The weakness of Christ Crucified appears (on the surface) to be the acquiescence of God to evil. This is certainly what the powers of evil thought:

...We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1Co 2:7-8)

To trust in providence is not the same as inaction. Rather, it is a description of the form and character of action. The death of Christ on the Cross is in no wise involuntary — it is not passive. A life lived in union with the providence of God is in no way passive — it is the action of the Cross within the world.