

Making a Cross

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This picture shows a wooden cross that I made the past week and hung on the living room wall in my country home in the Shenandoah Mountains of western Virginia. And I wish to share some of the meditations I had during the process of making this cross myself. The motive of making a cross with my own hands is not to save money but that I wished to feel the cross on which Lord Jesus hung through this process of making a cross.

So, instead of buying a cross at a bible store or from Amazon.com, I decided to use a branch of a Cedar tree from my property, which I had cut down some weeks ago. During this process, I minimized the use of power tools and used hand tools mostly. Cedarwood was used by Solomon in lining the interior walls of the temple of God which he built [1 Kings 6:9]. It was cut from the mountains of Lebanon and brought to Jerusalem for this purpose. I cut a section of the tree's branch with a diameter of about an inch as the material for making the cross. The picture below shows the pile of the cedar tree.



Based on the publicly available online information about the dimensional ratios of a western cross used in the evangelical Christian community, the ratio of the lengths of the vertical member and the horizontal members of a cross is 10:6, and the ratio of the vertical member about the intersection point and the same below this point is 3:7. These ratios are not absolute but are commonly used ratios.

From the branch I cut out from the Cedar tree, I cut 9 inches for the vertical member and 5.4 inches for the horizontal member based on the reference dimensional ratio. Then I proceeded to

carve out the barks from them and also form the front and the back sections of each member as flat surfaces. A thought that I had was that the cross used by the Roman soldiers to crucify Lord Jesus perhaps did not have straight dimensions like the modern-day lumber sold in construction materials stores like Home Depot because there were no power tools available then. It may have resembled the cross I am making using hand tools with some curves and bark segments still visible. The picture below shows the work in progress on my kitchen table together with some of the tools used.



As I was smoothing out the horizontal member of this cross, I assessed the positions on this wood where Jesus' hands must have been nailed. I smoothed out the sections while feeling these nail spots with my fingers and trying to feel the pain our Lord must have endured on His hands as His body weight pulled the hand muscles and tendons downward and caused pain beyond description.

Next, I started smoothing out the vertical member by cutting both the front and back surfaces. I guessed on the position on the vertical member where the feet of Lord Jesus must have been nailed. And I tried to feel the excruciating pain that He must have felt when the Roman soldiers drove a nail to both feet on that spot as I carefully smoothed the surface with the cutting knife.

Then, I cut out the intersecting portion of both the vertical and the horizontal members with a hand saw up to half of their thickness so that they would interlock at 90 degrees. I applied wood adhesive on them to establish their bonding. The head of Lord Jesus had a crown of thorns so that His head could not even rest on the flat surface above the intersection point. The thorns were piercing on His head and forehead constantly so that the blood must have kept on flowing down on His face. Above His head, there was a small panel written: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews," placed on the vertical member [Matt 27:37]. I tried to assess these positions on the vertical member of the cross as I smoothed the section. As I did so, uncontrollable tears kept welling up from my chest and I

wept as I continued my smoothing work, thinking of the physical pain as well as the heavy burden of bearing all sins of the sinners on His shoulders. He died such a cruel death for me and all repenting sinners although He was sinless. So great was the love of God expressed as He looked down from heaven on His Son as He hung on this cross, suffering, and bleeding until the moment He gave up His spirit saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit" [Luke 23:46].

Then, my meditation turned to how Joseph of Arimathea and certain disciples carefully lowered the body of Lord Jesus from the cross [Luke 23:53]. Although He could no longer feel the pain, they had to take care so that His body did not suffer any further injuries as they pulled the awful nails from His hands and feet. Then, they wrapped His body with linen, moved, and placed it in the rock-hewn sepulcher owned by Joseph. As I tried to appreciate what care and heartache these disciples must have had as they handled the body of their Lord, I sang the hymn "When I survey the wondrous cross" quietly, thinking of the great price paid for my salvation.

- 1. When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.*
- 2. Forbid it Lord that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God; All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.*
- 3. See, from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down; Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*
- 4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all. Amen.*

I placed the completed cross on the living room wall and prayed kneeling in front of it giving thanks for the price that our Lord Jesus paid on the cross of Calvary for the redemption of all sinners including myself. This experience of making a wooden cross was very useful in helping me appreciate the suffering of our Lord on the cross on Calvary hill. I'd like to encourage you to have a similar heart-warming experience by picking a tree branch and making it into a cross as your situation permits.

May the Lord give you the wisdom to help you maintain your immunity level high and avoid COVID risks around you! Amen.

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