

Chapter 52++: The Ceiling Cross

Life Application Verses:

1 Corinthians 1:18 - For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

In various locations of this book, I have mentioned my time in Rota, Spain. It was a time when I experienced personal issues with a failed marriage because I simply did not heed The Word of God (I actually believe that it was because His choice for me was waiting for me to leave Spain and return to the US). Sometimes we move through our lives as if we aren't living it, we are just occupying space from moment-to-moment. This was a time like that for about ½ of my tour in Rota. After my former wife left Rota with my son, I was in a situation where I found myself at a loss for who I was, where I was going, and why I was even using up Earth's oxygen. Then, remarkably, something happened. Someone gave me a Hal Lindsey book. I don't remember even which book it was, but I began to read it; as I did, my mother's nurturing in the Lord was coming back to me. You see, in our own strength, we are 100% unable to maintain any semblance of being a Christian. Without the Holy Spirit in our lives, we are 'treading water.'

Here's why: if you are separated from your source of power, how long do you think it takes until you are powerless? Answer: not long! In life, when we separate ourselves from Christ, we might think we have self-perpetuating power, but that is delusional! Remember the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15: 11-32? He received all his father's inheritance and blessings and he left. He was living the life of nirvana, until he ran out of self-perpetuating power, which was the inheritance he wasted on high-living. Then, at some point, the power-meter pegged zero! That's rock-bottom. Sometimes it takes this type of experience to fall so low the only way out is up. Towards God. That's what the Hal Lindsey book did for me. It started me to thinking about my life, my Christian upbringing, and I began to move up. Towards God. Back towards the Cross of Christ. I had become a prodigal and lost my focus on what little 'Christianity' I held onto—like asking God to get me out of jams or help me survive a ruptured appendix. Like many wandering, rebellious, Born-again believers—YES, that happens—I think the Lord was telling me that I was on the cusp of His wrath so severe that I would not be allowed to continue. And I listened...

When my ex-wife left Spain, I moved into a 7th floor room in an apartment complex on the beach at Rota. I was fortunate to locate a room that faced one view of the beach, and where lights from adjoining apartments came in through my window. The window of my bedroom looked similar to the one in the picture you see here. Do you see anything particularly interesting in this image? Let me give you a hint: **1 Corinthians 1:18** – “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Keyword: Cross; Image in the Window: Cross. See where I’m going with this? I had started reading the Hal Lindsey book, I moved into the apartment with this window, and my return to Serving Christ was converging into a well-placed set of lights and a window frame. Sounds crazy? Keep reading...



As I finished the Lindsey book, I began to Pray—the kind of Prayer that you get on your knees to Pray. I Prayed about my life as I was living it at that time; I began to read through my Bible for the first time in my life; and, every night when I turned out the light, that shadow of the Cross was directly over my bed. I would look up and there as plain as anything that I have ever known, was the Cross. Well placed lights and a simple window frame created the most precious symbol in my life at a time when I needed it most. I would look up at that Cross and listen to God. It was one of the most astonishing times in my life. Then, something happened that I remember with chills up my spine.

I had picked up a mask in the Philippines and it was on the wall in my room. I began to have nightmares that the enemy was after me. It was a reoccurring dream every single night for weeks. I even had trouble reading my Bible, Praying, and dreaded going to sleep. To this day, I believe that God placed the shadow of that Cross on my ceiling as a message that I would survive this test. After a few weeks of this nightmarish dream, which was so real, I mentioned it to a Christian friend in Rota. He began to ask me questions, like what did I have in my possession that might be used by the enemy to attack me in my dreams. I was so puzzled by his questions; yet, when I mentioned to him that I had that mask from the Philippines, he almost leapt off his feet. He told me to go to my apartment without delay, rip that mask from the wall, and get rid of it. I

did as he suggested. That night—and for all the following nights in that apartment—I never had that dream again! But I had the Cross on my ceiling to remind me of my return to God, and to live again for Christ.

As I write this, these memories are as clear as a cloudless day. The book, the ceiling cross, and my return to God put me square in the crosshairs of the enemy. But, God in the Holy Spirit sent me a messenger. Thinking back on that experience, was it coincidence that the Cross on the ceiling of my bedroom was there every night?; was the Hal Lindsey book just chance that I received a copy?; was it just alignment of the stars that my Christian friend was at that place in my life at that exact time that I needed it? Not a chance in this world. I am convinced God reached out to me when I needed Him because He could see where my life was going. The Love of Jesus for me reached down and grabbed me by the Heart. For me, it was a lifeline before I let go...

It was God moving the elements of my puzzle into place so that I would know that because I was being Faithful to return to Him in Christ Jesus, He was going to release me from the attack of the enemy. What other explanation is there? None. If we Christians bend to the Will of our God, and in Faith, take that first step, He will order the rest of our steps. I had moved from being a prodigal, to ordinary Christian living, heading to extraordinary living for Him. Don't misunderstand what happened here: prodigal, repentance, return to God, remembering the precious Blood of Christ shed, and being saved from this attack of the enemy that attempted to stop the process from moving forward. God intervened. And every night when I Prayed on my knees after reading my Bible, that Cross on the ceiling was such comfort because it reminded me of the years I had wasted being rebellious. Wasted hardly defines what I lost in those years in terms of Blessings, Witnessing, and only God knows what else is on this list.

I had moved so far from Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good, that I was just keeping time in life as I watched it go by every day. God knew that at that time in my prodigal existence, I needed the Hal Lindsey book, that Cross on the ceiling, and my Christian friend. God knew what was about to happen to me in my nightmares! I started attending Church again (a small Baptist church there in Rota—in a highly Catholic nation). I began to learn that what my mom (and dad) had taught us all those years growing up meant something important---every Prayer they prayed, every Bible verse they read to us, and every Christmas when they would sit us down around the

tree and read the Christmas Story in Luke, Chapter 2. Here I was some 3,000 miles from home and I was hearing the voice of my mom in what I was going through. Oh that you could see a Cross like that in your life! It's not just a Cross, it is: *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* That's what that Cross over my bed was to me --- THE POWER OF GOD. The Power to make a universe; to be able to name every star; to give us the most Precious Gift of all—Christ Jesus as our substitution on that Cross. That is Life, Eternal Life, for those who accept it and live it. Because accepting it and falling away is a hard life—A HARD LIFE! Oh the Blessings we miss when we live as a prodigal!

Listen to the very words of Jesus as he gives us insight into what it will cost us to be rebellious and leave the care and safety of His Fellowship in Luke 15: 11-32:

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. ²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one

of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Within this Holy Passage from Jesus Himself, there are a few key elements. First, Jesus is telling this as a parable, but He is actually reaching across two thousand years of time to 2016. I think He knew well that even Christians struggle with being Faithful 100% of the time. More important is to ask ourselves how many Christians have become complacent about their Faith? How many Believers focus on Earthly Living instead of Earthly Good, and less Heavenly Minded than we know in our hearts that God expects? I’m not making any judgments in what I am relating to you here, nor would I even dare to assume someone’s Salvation, as that is for God and God alone in Christ Jesus. But, I do believe that when Christians live in the ‘me, myself and I’ mode, we are walking a dangerous path without the active Power of God in our lives. Once the prodigal son in the story Jesus told left home, did he then have the same access to the Father’s resources? Remember what the father in the story said to the son that remained faithful to the father: ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’ When we deliberately step out of the resources of God, we are operating on self-resources. They will run dry at some point—you can bet the farm on that one. Just as the prodigal son ‘squandered his wealth in wild living’, being rebellious towards God is a costly thing. Listen to what Jesus said and use His Truth to avoid learning lessons the hard way.

Second, there is an underlying theme of forgiveness. The father in the story probably grieved when the prodigal son left home. That father, just like our Heavenly Father, grieved that the son had chosen to strike out and leave the protection, care, love, and resources that the father provided. The son spent all he had, dined with the pigs, and finally realized what he had

done. Once he was at the end of himself, he remembered what he had left behind. And once he decided to return home, what did his father do? Throw stones at him? No! Read again what happened: ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

That last sentence was my experience with God in Christ Jesus in Rota, Spain. How did I end up with that particular apartment, with that window, with the lights outside positioned perfectly to create that shadow of the Cross on my ceiling? I don’t believe for a moment that it was coincidence, or luck, or anything other than God saying to me: “Ken, you are a Child of God; you have been living as if you were dead, but you are alive again in Christ; you have been lost in your ways, but now you have returned and you have found that My Grace is Sufficient.” I will believe this to the day I take my last breath on this Earth. And Jesus knew that in my repentance and return to God in Him, I was going to be attacked by the enemy. They led me to a friend, I received a life changing book that led me back to The Bible, and without God in Christ defending me and providing a way out of those nightmares, my life was on hold. Once those horrible dreams stopped, I began to rebuild my Faith, Christian living, and my fellowship with God. It’s not perfect even today, but it is always towards the Goal of Christ, even when I stumble and fall down. I don’t wallow long there before God reminds me (in various ways) of Luke 15: 11-32.

If you are reading these words, I would guess that every one of you out there have similar stories. In other words, there are times when life is hard, we fall away, or we stumble and fall from fellowship with God. It might be a week, month, or years. I hope that this true story will help you find your *Ceiling Cross* that helps you return to living for God in Christ Jesus. You may have stopped reading your Bible, but listen to Matthew 4:4 ““But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘**People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**’” If you feel like a prodigal, open your Bible and read the Words of God and Jesus.

Question of Curiosity:

If you have prodigal experiences in your life, and you Pray for God to use these experiences in your life, and you have children, relate these experiences to them so that they might have perspective on what it means to be out of the Will of God. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is such a powerful story to use when Training up a child in the way they should go so that when they are old, they will not depart from it. My mom and dad did this for us and I remembered their words through the years. You can do the same for your children. And you say...

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“The pattern of the prodigal is: rebellion, ruin, repentance, reconciliation, restoration.”

~ Edwin Louis Cole ~

“Every time I see my brother, I just praise God for God's grace in his life. Because if God can change Franklin from a prodigal into a man of God, he can do it for anybody.”

~ Anne Graham Lotz ~

“The farther I run away from the place where God dwells, the less I am able to hear the voice that calls me the Beloved, and the less I hear that voice, the more entangled I become in the manipulations and power games of the world.”

~ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Return of the Prodigal Son* ~

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My Prayer For You:

Lord God of Heaven, if it were not for Your Mercy, Grace, Love, and Forgiveness, where would we be as a people who have accepted the Gift of Salvation in Christ Jesus? We all stumble and fall; we all tend at times to listen to our way of doing things in our lives; and we all are capable of faltering and becoming a prodigal son or daughter. As I have related this difficult time in my life, my only Hope and Prayer is that if someone finds this message, it is not a message of hopelessness, but a message of Hope. If there is anyone who is living in a rebellious nature at this point in their life, I Pray that they would stop for a moment, take a look at their lives in earnest, and ask themselves if what they are doing is Pleasing to You, O Lord. Is what they (or I) are doing acceptable to The King of Kings, Christ Jesus? Ask this in every thought, action, and motive that we have, take, or consider, in our lives. Is it pleasing to God the Father? Is it acceptable to Jesus Christ, The Son of God? If the answer is no to either of these questions, then living as a prodigal son or daughter is going to be a hard life. At some point, you will run out of resources; before that happens, I Pray that God will do for you what He did for me at that point in my life. Lord, I ask You to move in the lives of we prodigals so that we will recognize that we are not in Your Will. Make us aware of this and in Your Grace, nudge us to a return to the Father, just as Jesus told us in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. It may seem that living apart from You, God, is wise in our own eyes, but that is an illusion that will soon dissipate before our own eyes. I ask this Prayer in the name of Christ Jesus, for those prodigals who have turned away from Your Will. Amen.

Not This Time...

To fail and fall is past and now; It stings in heart and head and brow,
I fear to think that it may be; Forever to fail and fall, for me.
I study and Pray thyself approved; Yet this world so brash, unmoved,
It stings my heart, and head, and brow; To fail and fall is past and now.
I stand upright declare to all; I will not stumble, I will not fall,
Not this time will I fail; For my Lord took my nails.
Yet on the morrow did I stumble; Now in heart a mighty rumble,
That yearns me back into The Word; Lose not hope, I surely heard.
Not this time, O Lord, Not This Time...

Another day, demands begin; I walk this life, forgive my sin,
Declare to self, 'No falls today'; Not this time, I hear me say.
The enemy catches me unaware; I nearly fall, I know not where,
In Praise to Christ, I lift *my* hands; Oh Savior, catch me with *Thy* Hands.
At work, at play, my feet they trod; Within, without, I walk this sod,
Thy Hands have made in Glory Grande; a Saved by Grace simple man.
Declared, I DO, not this time; I will not fall, O Lord, the grime,
Of Life's demands in fullness must; Has my Faith turned to rust?
Not this time, O Lord, Not This Time...

O Lord, My God, forgive my doubt; Battered by 'him', I want to SHOUT!
Greater is He that Lives in Me; In Spirit and Truth, My Soul Set Free.
Even this day, harassed I've been; Not this time, choose willful sin,
My Jesus Christ, My Lord is He; I shall not want, He walks with me.
Yet on the morrow did I stumble; Now in heart a mighty rumble,
Have I not been here before; Knocking at this familiar door.
I turn about, in anger hot; O God, My God, oh let me not,
Fall down this day, another day; I Lift My Hands, I Humbly Pray.
Not this time, O Lord, Not This Time...

I fear to think that it may be; Forever to fail and fall, for me,
For in the struggle to Faithful be, Remember I must, Christ walks with me.
He lifts me up, more times unknown; Than I can number, I'm not alone,
I pledge to self, oh not this time; To fall away, is not sublime.
My promise made, I am renewed; My hope rekindled, deeds still skewed,
My fear to think that it may be; Forever to fail and fall, for me.
O Father, will I ever be; Faithful to Christ, in *all* of me?
The struggle that lives on in me; Has made in me a direst plea,
Not this time, O Lord, Not This Time...

Today a trial, unreal-unknown; How can this be, in Faith I've grown,
Yet standing here, my words of care; I called, 'My God, are you not there?'
My temper flares, my anger burns; Holding tight, to Christ, I yearn,
I shout to self, oh **not** this time; To fall away, I'll not resign.
To God in Christ, To Faithful be; I call the more, have Mercy on me,
For if I fall, this time I know; I may not seek, to further Grow.
O Father, will I **ever** be; Faithful to Christ, in **all** of me?
Just this day I shout my plea; Beyond my Hope, to fully see,
Not this time, O Lord, Not This Time...

The hour is late with moon above; Yet for me Your Promise of Love,
Even in the midst of care; My fear of failure is still **right** there.
A song I hear, *Joseph's Lullaby*; Gives me hope, my Christ is nigh,
I refuse to think that it may be; Forever to fail and fall, for me,
For someday soon I'll homeward fly; Let not my falls Pass You By;
I Am That I Am, O Holy God; Give me wisdom, strength, and Nod,
To understand Life as You give guide; To reach Your Will, Side-by-Side.
That I remember Your Words of Heart; For in those Words, I no more depart,
Not this time, O Lord, Not This Time...

To fail and fall is past and gone; As I no longer walk alone,
It's not that I will fail and fall; It's that in Christ I must stand tall.
Not in **my** own strength and *will*; But God in Christ, it is **His Will**,
Then when I fall flat on my face; I look Up and find His Grace.
To carry me through times of doubt; To hear the Angels Praise of Shout,
Almighty God, and Father to Thee; To fail and fall is not to be.
The end of life, nor shall you stay; Fall on your knees, Boldly Pray,
A sinner I am, by Grace I'll be; Forgiven in Christ, turn from Thee?
Not this time, O Lord, **Not This Time...**

Dedicated to Christians everywhere who struggle, fail, and fall;
Yet, they confess their struggles, failures, and falls; they get up, forgiven,
and Serve God in Christ Jesus!

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21 April 2015
