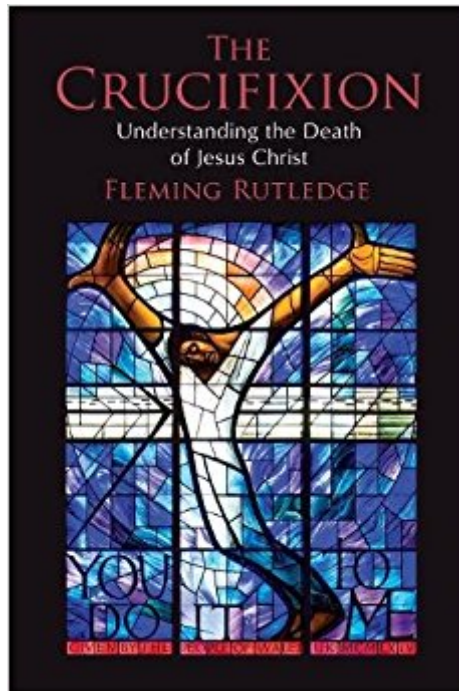




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# The Crucifixion: Understanding The Death Of Jesus Christ



## Synopsis

Though the apostle Paul boldly proclaimed “Christ crucified” as the heart of the gospel, Fleming Rutledge notes that preaching about the cross of Christ is remarkably neglected in most churches today. In this book Rutledge addresses the issues and controversies that have caused pastors to speak of the cross only in the most general, bland terms, precluding a full understanding and embrace of the gospel by their congregations.

Countering our contemporary tendency to bypass Jesus’ crucifixion, Rutledge in these pages examines in depth all the various themes and motifs used by the New Testament evangelists and apostolic writers to explain the meaning of the cross of Christ. She mines the classical writings of the Church Fathers, the medieval scholastics, and the Reformers as well as more recent scholarship, while bringing them all into contemporary context. Widely known for her preaching, Rutledge seeks to encourage preachers, teachers, and anyone else interested in what Christians believe to be the central event of world history.

## Book Information

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[View larger](#) Part 1: The Crucifixion Part 1 is a four-chapter section designed to give a broad overview of (1) the nature of crucifixion as a mode of execution and its unique place in the Christian

story, and (2) some of the major issues raised by the fact that Jesus died in this particular way. A special chapter on Anselm bridges chapters 3 and 4. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on injustice and the overarching category of Sin. There is a specific reason for moving the theme of Sin forward into the first major section instead of postponing it to part 2. Sin, understood as a Power, lies at the very heart of the underlying meaning of the cross, and that is the reason for tackling it at the outset.

Chapters    The Primacy of the Cross    The Godlessness of the Cross    The Question of Justice

Bridge: Anselm Reconsidered for Our Time    The Gravity of Sin

Part 2: The Biblical Motifs    Part 2 lays out the richness and variety of the biblical material. The introduction to part 2 outlines the way that the New Testament writers use numerous motifs of great depth and richness to expound the meaning of the cross. The following eight chapters examine each of the principal motifs in turn.

Chapters    The Passover and the Exodus    The Blood Sacrifice    Ransom and Redemption    The Great Assize    The Apocalyptic War: Christus Victor

The Descent into Hell    The Substitution    Recapitulation

Praise for the Book

Scot McKnight    "In this amazingly complex but clear book Fleming Rutledge goes deftly where few seem willing to go— to the variety of imaginations shaping early Christian explorations of the significance of Jesus's death. She is one of the few theologians who not only preach inclusivism but practice it by inviting all points of view into the discussion."    Stanley Hauerwas    "This is a work of a lifetime that could only be written by someone who has lived a life determined by the cross."

Leanne Van Dyk    "Before we can get to the glorious resurrection, we must take full account of the tragic necessity of the cross. . . . Penetrating and unflinching in its insistence on Jesus Christ, condemned, crucified, dead, and buried, this book powerfully demonstrates that this is good news of cosmic and comprehensive scope."

Bishop Robert Barron    "One of the most stimulating and thought-provoking books of theology that I have read in the past ten years. . . . Rutledge has an extraordinary knack of cutting to the heart of the matter. Her book on the central reality of the Christian faith is supremely illuminating, a delight for the inquiring mind—and man, will it ever preach."

Fleming Rutledge    Fleming Rutledge is an Episcopal priest widely recognized in North America and the UK as a preacher, lecturer, and teacher of other preachers. Her published sermon collections have received acclaim across denominational lines. Ordained to the diaconate in 1975, Rutledge

was one of the first women to be ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church (January 1977). She matriculated at General Theological Seminary and received her Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1975. For fourteen years Rutledge was assistant and then Senior Associate at Grace Church in New York City. She also served as interim rector of St. John's, Salisbury, Connecticut, and has twice been a resident Fellow at the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton. She has been a resident at Wycliffe College in the University of Toronto School of Theology, where she taught preaching, and also a Visiting Scholar at the American Academy in Rome.

Stanley Hauerwas *—* • Duke Divinity School "This is a work of a lifetime that could only be written by someone who has lived a life determined by the cross." Scot McKnight *—* • author of *The Jesus Creed* "In this amazingly complex but clear book Fleming Rutledge goes deftly where few seem willing to go *—* • to the variety of imaginations shaping early Christian explorations of the significance of Jesus's death. She is one of the few theologians who not only preach inclusivism but practice it by inviting *—* • all *—* • points of view into the discussion." Marilyn McCord Adams *—* • Rutgers University "To those who think they want a maximally mellow God who overlooks our faults and accepts us just as we are, Rutledge's challenge is to *—* • get real. *—* • Twentieth-century atrocities bear witness: there is something drastically wrong with the human condition, which only God can fix. Setting things right calls for crucifixion, not only Christ's but also ours. Rutledge has given us a very Pauline book, full of information and observations to provoke clergy to preach the cross to their congregations." Leanne Van Dyk *—* • Columbia Theological Seminary "Before we can get to the glorious resurrection, we must take full account of the tragic necessity of the cross. . . . Penetrating and unflinching in its insistence on Jesus Christ, condemned, crucified, dead, and buried, this book powerfully demonstrates that the crucifixion of the Son of God is good news of cosmic and comprehensive scope." Richard J. Mouw *—* • Fuller Theological Seminary "Though I have been thinking much about the cross of Christ for a half-century now, Fleming Rutledge has taught me many new things in this wonderful book. And where she addresses matters that I have long cherished, she has inspired me anew. This book is a gift to all of us who pray for a genuine revival of crucicentric preaching and cruciform discipleship!" Larry W. Hurtado *—* • University of Edinburgh "Demonstrating impressively wide reading, incisive observations, and a passionate concern for clear thinking and faithful preaching, this book is a big read but well worth the effort, especially for clergy *—* • but also for thoughtful laity." George Hunsinger *—* • Princeton Theological Seminary "After publishing numerous

books of powerful sermons, remarkable for their biblical depth and their contemporary relevance, Fleming Rutledge has now produced this profound volume on the saving significance of Christ's death. She makes the welcome argument that 'Christus Victor' themes need to be counterbalanced by priestly elements like substitution and expiation. . . . Here is the kind of strong theology that will undergird strong preaching. Preachers who take this book to heart could well revitalize the church."

Katherine Sonderegger • Virginia Theological Seminary "Fleming Rutledge here lays out the horror of the cross with unflinching honesty and with a patient, full exposition of the rich themes of Christ's redeeming death. She does not shy away from the demands of her theological vision, taking up motifs of satisfaction, substitution, rectification, and divine wrath in turn. Throughout, Rutledge draws on the rich storehouse of a preacher. The whole world stands under her gaze • literary examples, political folly and cruelty, horrendous evils of war and torment and torture, religious timidity and self-deception, human faithlessness and sin. But always the gospel rings out. Christ's cross has won the victory, and it is all from God. This book is a moving testimony to the courage, intelligence, and faithfulness of one of the church's premier preachers. Every student of the Scriptures needs this book."

John D. Witvliet • Calvin Institute of Christian Worship "A deeply probing and richly evocative exploration of the central mystery of the Christian faith. This is a book to contemplate, to savor, to reread. It promises to nourish renewed Christian preaching, a new generation of Christian poets and hymnwriters, and ministries of witness, evangelism, pastoral care, worship, and Christian education that brim with doxological testimonies about the counter-intuitive, counter-cultural reality of Jesus' life-giving death. It is easy to glibly repeat Paul's claim that Jesus' death is a scandal and stumbling block. It is quite something else to let that claim transform how you perceive the world and the triune God who created it. This book confronts all that is glib and evokes that life-giving transformation."

Philip G. Ziegler • University of Aberdeen "To read this book is to share in a work of joyful, honest, evangelical thinking done right at the foot of the pulpit steps for the sake of the one thing that finally matters in the church • the hearing and proclamation of the word of the cross in all its scandalous power."

Mark Galli • editor of 'Christianity Today' "I can hardly think of a book more necessary for our time. Many well-meaning attempts to summarize the good news today barely allude to the cross, and we're left with an anemic if not a false gospel. Read, mark, and inwardly digest this book if you want to learn about the cross that truly rectifies the ungodly, even the likes of you and me."

Paul Scott Wilson • University of Toronto "In beautiful flowing words, Fleming Rutledge encourages the church to get over its often embarrassed silence on the crucifixion. Her immediate accomplishment is brilliant. She recovers a rich array of

biblical images relating to Christ's death and places them within the final stages of a drama in which God is the principal actor and humanity has a vital role. Persistent readers will find their hearts transformed. Preachers will be emboldened to speak more frequently of the cross, contributing to the gospel renewal of the church." Nicholas Wolterstorff — • Yale University

"The word that came to my mind as I read Fleming Rutledge's book — The Crucifixion — was 'bracing': the book is bracing in its vigorous affirmation of the centrality of Christ's crucifixion in the Christian proclamation, bracing in its description of the unspeakable horror and shame of the crucifixion, bracing in its affirmation that we are one and all sinners, bracing in its identification and rejection of the many forms of theological silliness now inhabiting the church. Though meant for pastors and laypeople, this book will also benefit scholars. It carries its deep learning with eloquence and grace. I will be returning to it." J. Louis Martyn — • Union Theological Seminary

"In the crucifixion we sense anew the intersection at which Christian drama and Christian dogma meet one another with announcements that are emphatically universal and nothing less than cosmic. At that intersection we are truly fortunate to have the voice of Fleming Rutledge, one of the most gifted theological preachers of our time. In her writing we encounter the confluence of high drama and arresting dogma, as they work together to strengthen the preacher and provide a high-protein diet that will nourish the congregation to vigorous health." Stephen Westerholm — • McMaster University

"If churches of the twenty-first century are to bear any relation to those of the first, then the cross of Christ must return to the center of their proclamation and life: that, in essence, is the message of Fleming Rutledge's — The Crucifixion, a book that should serve to mediate much contemporary biblical scholarship on the subject to ministers and other interested readers. Unlike a good deal of that scholarship, however, Rutledge treats a variety of New Testament motifs that speak to the salvific effects of Christ's death, refusing to allow any one motif to so dominate the discussion as to exclude the others. Richly illustrated with examples from literature and current events, this book should prove a gold mine for preachers at the same time as it invites the careful reflection of every reader on the mystery of salvation." David Bentley Hart — • author of — The Beauty of the Infinite and Atheist Delusions

"Rutledge's work on the crucifixion is not only broad but also deep. Thought-provoking, often moving, this book offers a genuinely novel approach to a topic on which it often seems nothing new can be said." Robert W. Jenson — • Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology

"This justly celebrated preacher has been digging into the doctrine of atonement for many years. Here is the rich harvest of her labors — a resource especially for preachers like herself." Douglas Harink — • The King's University, Edmonton, Canada

"In

this bold, uncompromising, nuanced, and expansive work Rutledge takes us through *and beyond* theories of atonement, avoiding all merely individualistic, spiritualized, religious, moralistic, and therapeutic reductions of the meaning of the crucifixion. Rutledge resolutely proclaims the truth of Christ crucified. To all priests, preachers, and professors: if you care about the church and its mission in history, read this book!" Joseph Mangina *University of Toronto* "Who put the roses on the cross?" asked Goethe, who in fact preferred that the brutal cross be covered in roses. Fleming Rutledge brushes the roses aside and asks us to look at the cross and, even more so, at Him who hung upon it for our sake. This is a book marked by outstanding exegesis, theology, and pastoral sensitivity *a book for thinking Christians and even thinking unbelievers.*" Martinus C. de Boer *VU University Amsterdam* "In this thoroughly readable book, preacher-theologian Fleming Rutledge demonstrates that she is also a fine exegete. She brings recent scholarship on Paul's apocalyptic theology (in particular the work of J. Louis Martyn) fruitfully to bear in her profound and far-ranging theological reflections on the crucifixion. Through careful exegetical study of the Bible in dialogue with a range of interpreters, she has produced a book that merits a wide readership among theologians, biblical scholars, and preachers." Christopher Morse *Union Theological Seminary* "In the rich tradition of the preacher-theologian, Fleming Rutledge in her own incisive voice gives testimony to the rectifying significance of Christ's crucifixion with detailed exposition that is at once deeply reflective and full of deep conviction. From a wealth of scholarly references and observations ranging from Scripture, the history of church imagery and its critics, literature, modern theology, and the daily news, readers will find much to ponder in this commendably studied yet vitally proclamatory gospel treatise." Arne Rasmusson *University of Gothenburg, Sweden* "In this remarkable study of the cross Fleming Rutledge weaves together many metaphors, motifs, and themes into a hermeneutically well-reasoned synthesis. She has mastered an incredible amount of material, including biblical scholarship, the history of theology, and contemporary systematic theology. And she is a master communicator. This is a great book." Dirk Smit *University of Stellenbosch, South Africa* "Fleming Rutledge's reputation as a preacher is widely known, her rhetorical skills *of logos, ethos, and pathos; of content, engagement, and passion* widely respected. This treatment of the crucifixion *the fruit of almost two decades, and indeed of a lifelong journey* could in fact also be read as one long sermon. . . . What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ died for us? Honestly facing her own resistance to many traditional and contemporary framings of this question, she consults widely and delves deeply into biblical, historical, and interpretive material in search of her own answers. . . . Informing,

reminding, critiquing, illustrating, unmasking, challenging, reassuring, encouraging, and inspiring, she writes for both preachers and listeners. The question "Will it preach?" is in fact her major concern. The answer can only be a resounding and grateful "Yes!"

Fleming Rutledge is an Episcopal priest widely recognized in North America and the UK as a preacher, lecturer, and teacher of other preachers. Her published sermon collections, most recently *And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament*, have received acclaim across denominational lines. Among her other books are *The Bible and The New York Times*, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: Sermons from Paul's Letter to the Romans*, and *The Battle for Middle-earth: Tolkien's Divine Design in The Lord of the Rings*.

One of the most needed and important books to be written in our day. Here is the essence of the Christian Faith written in such a fashion as to set forth the Person of Jesus Christ, and His ministry, in a fair, yet uncompromising fashion. So much today in pulpits and so-called Christian literature is nothing more than good advice, Rutledge had set forth the Good News in a way that the church, and the unchurched, would do well to listen. There is nothing trendy about this book, but enables the reader to genuinely consider, and hopefully embrace, the reality and meaning of Christ's crucifixion. If the reader is looking for more "theological fluff", this is not the book for you. The work reveals in a faithful way the life-changing Reality of Christ. Get it and rejoice in Christ's work!

A very detailed exposition of the epicenter of the Christian faith, which cuts through the liberal and conservative dogmas that often limit our understanding and tolerance of each other. Fairly deep at times for a non-theologian, although it contains unexpected upwellings of insight, awareness and joy.

Breathtaking scholarship roots this outstanding book and gives wings to a subject which is more than needful in this age in which Christian religion has been reduced to veneers. I have given 4 copies to friends. 2 pastors in my church also are reading it. While deemphasizing the cross as jewelry, she shuns the macabre Mel Gibson-esque fascination with mere gawking at what was state sanctioned torturing a man to death, and launches out into the depths of what the Crucifixion and its power was to God himself and to and for the Christian particular. She posits that it is (I would emphasize) the power that can solve and resolve the moral morass of our times. The cross is seen as more than a means of justification but also sanctification that can really kill sin. It's a book that



can inform the pastor, the theologian, but also the layman because it reads so lucidly. Her prose is wonderful because she was a brilliant English major and a supremely gifted public speaker and preacher. However devotional the prose, make no mistake, this is a book of rather deep theology as well. It is no lightweight, at 669 pages and some 1500 footnotes. This book should transform the lives of those who prayerfully read it. God grant that Galatians 2.20 (I have been crucified with Christ) may be effectually subsumed into the lives of all who read this wonderful book.

Perhaps not a subject that everyone wants to join in, this extraordinary well written, but detailed, meditation on the meanings and unique importance of the Crucifixion of Jesus, is a major addition and contribution to the literature. While not every conclusion will be accepted by many readers (including this one), the joy of reading this extended work, is to follow the well argued position in clear and wonderfully written English.

Where some theologians write to obfuscate, Rutledge writes for clear understanding. But more importantly, the theology she witnesses to is the heart and soul of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This book is a breath of fresh air. The rigid hold of penal substitution has been choking atonement theology for some time. Rutledge does what she can to change the context of Anselm's theory, but she really doesn't rehabilitate it. Does Anselm presume a doctrine of the Trinity that is inadequate? Her insight is correct, however. The Trinity is where Atonement takes us. In any case, she widens the playing field, while showing us that we have not found a doctrine of Atonement that is anywhere near being a satisfactory one. That is why up to now there is no church dogma on the Atonement that has been found acceptable to "the Church."

Wonderful book. Thorough and an easy read, especially if you have some background in SS study. This is the result of a lifetime of research, teaching and preaching.

Excellent book!!

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