

Interpretation of the Cross in the Theology Of Glory: A Hermeneutical Study on the Truth of Christ's Suffering and Glory

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the theological meaning of the cross from the perspective of the theology of glory through a hermeneutical approach. The cross, historically viewed as a symbol of suffering and humiliation, in Christian faith becomes the center of salvation and the deepest manifestation of God's love. This study arises from the theological tension between the suffering and glory of Christ, often considered two opposing realities. Through literature review and hermeneutical analysis of biblical texts such as John 12:23-28 and Philippians 2:5-11, the article finds that suffering and glory are inseparable aspects of God's plan of salvation. The cross is understood as a path of obedience leading to exaltation and glory, and as the locus gloriae – a place where God's love and glory are paradoxically revealed. The findings of this study affirm that the theology of glory can only be properly understood when dialectically engaged with the theology of the cross. Thus, Christian faith is called to understand suffering not as failure, but as part of the process towards glory in Christ. In the context of modern life, which is full of suffering, this understanding becomes a source of hope and strength for believers to remain faithful in bearing the cross with their eyes fixed on the promised glory

INTRODUCTION

Background

The cross occupies a very significant position in Christian theology, as it is the center of the mystery of faith and salvation. Since the early church, the cross has been understood not merely as a humiliating execution instrument, but as a sign of God's love willing to sacrifice for the salvation of humanity. Paul explicitly wrote that the cross is "foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Thus, the cross is not only a symbol of suffering, but also a manifestation of God's redeeming power and love for humanity. (Fanni et al., 2025)

However, the cross simultaneously presents a sharp contradiction in the understanding of the Christian faith. On one hand, the cross symbolizes the suffering, humiliation, and death of Jesus Christ (Andreas, 2024). On the other hand, the Christian tradition also affirms that it is through the cross that Christ's glory is revealed, especially in His resurrection and ascension. This paradox raises a fundamental question: how can suffering filled with humiliation become a path to glory? This question has continued to be a central focus of theological reflection throughout the history of the church (Jacob, 2025).

The contradiction between suffering and glory reveals a tension that needs to be understood with the right approach. If suffering is separated from glory, the cross will only be seen as a historical tragedy without transcendental meaning (Daryanto, 2022). Conversely, if glory is emphasized without suffering, theology risks falling into triumphalism that ignores the reality of the cross. Therefore, a framework of understanding that can integrate both in a balanced manner is needed.

In this context, hermeneutics plays an important role as a theological approach. Hermeneutics does not merely read the text of the Scriptures literally, but also unravels the deeper meaning behind symbols and narratives. Through hermeneutics, the suffering and glory of Christ can be understood as a dialectical unity that complements each other. This process of interpretation opens up space for a richer understanding of faith, both historically, theologically, and existentially (Limbong, 2024).

Thus, the background of this research is based on the awareness that the cross cannot be understood partially. It must be understood in a dialectical relationship between suffering and glory. A hermeneutical approach allows us to discover the profound theological message of the event of the cross, namely that suffering is not the end, but rather the gateway to glory (Siagian, 2024). This serves as an important foundation for research on the interpretation of the cross in the theology of glory.

The formulation of the problem in this study arises from the theological tension that is clearly visible between suffering and glory in the cross of Christ. On the one hand, the cross is a symbol of suffering, which in worldly traditions is considered ignoble and shameful. On the other hand, Christian faith interprets the cross as the path leading to glory, both through the resurrection and the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God. It is this tension that gives rise to fundamental issues in theological hermeneutics.

The question that arises is: how can the cross be interpreted within the framework of the theology of glory without losing the meaning of the suffering inherent in it? Can the suffering of Christ on the cross be understood not merely as a tragedy, but as a path toward glory? How does a hermeneutical approach help build a more balanced understanding between the suffering and glory of Christ? Furthermore, the formulation of the problem also touches on aspects of relevance for contemporary believers. If the cross of Christ contains both dimensions of suffering and glory, how can this understanding be applied to facing the realities of modern human suffering? In other words, this research is not merely theoretical, but also contextual, thus producing living and relevant theological reflection.

The main objective of this study is to describe and analyze how the cross can be interpreted from the perspective of the theology of glory through a hermeneutical approach. Thus, this study aims to show that the suffering and glory of Christ are not two separate things, but constitute a unity in God's plan of salvation.

Specifically, this study aims: first, to examine the significance of the cross in Christian theology as the center of faith and salvation. Second, to explain the theological contradiction between suffering and glory, and to find a perspective that integrates both. Third, to apply a hermeneutical approach in interpreting biblical texts that speak about the cross and glory, such as John 12:23-28 and Philippians 2:5-11. Furthermore, this study also aims to produce theological reflections that are relevant to contemporary faith life. By emphasizing the dialectic of suffering and glory, it is hoped that this research can contribute to enriching contextual theology that is capable of addressing the challenges of the times, particularly for believers who are facing suffering, crisis, or life struggles. In this way, the cross of Christ becomes not only an abstract doctrine but also a source of comfort, hope, and spiritual strength.

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (Habsy, 2017). The main focus is directed at theological analysis of the Scripture texts and classical as well as contemporary theological works that discuss the cross, suffering, and glory. A literature study is chosen because the issues being investigated are conceptual and theological in nature, thus requiring the exploration of textual sources to build a solid argument (Manurung, 2022).

The hermeneutic approach serves as the main methodological framework in this study. Hermeneutics is understood as the art and science of interpretation, particularly in examining scriptural texts. Through hermeneutics, this research aims to uncover the dialectical meaning between the suffering and glory of Christ contained in the Biblical narrative. In this way, the text is not only understood in its historical context but also interpreted for the life of contemporary believers.

The primary source of this research is the Bible, particularly texts that speak about the cross and glory, including John 12:23-28, Philippians 2:5-11, and 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. Secondary sources include classical theological literature such as the works of Martin Luther (Heidelberg Disputation), John Calvin (Institutes of the Christian Religion), as well as modern theologians like Jürgen Moltmann (The Crucified God) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (The Glory of the

Lord). Hermeneutical literature by Hans-Georg Gadamer is also used to strengthen the interpretative framework.

The analysis method used is descriptive-interpretative analysis. Descriptive analysis is carried out by outlining theological views regarding the cross and glory, while interpretative analysis is used to interpret the connection between the two from a hermeneutic perspective (Wiratama, n.d.). Thus, the research results are expected to not only present a theological description but also a deep and contextual interpretation.

Ultimately, this research method is directed towards practical goals, namely providing a tangible contribution to the development of contemporary Christian theology. By combining literature studies, hermeneutic analysis, and theological reflection, this research seeks to produce an understanding that is relevant for believers in experiencing the meaning of Christ's suffering and glory amidst the realities of daily life (Sidjabat, n.d.).

In addition, this study also aims to broaden theological insights in understanding the relationship between Biblical texts and the relevant social, cultural, and historical contexts. Thus, it is hoped that this research can make a meaningful contribution to enriching the existing theological framework of thought. Moreover, with a holistic hermeneutical approach, this study also seeks to demonstrate the relevance and applicability of Christian theology in the daily lives of believers. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive and profound perspective on the meaning of Christ's suffering and glory for believers in the context of contemporary life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Concept of the Cross in Christian

TheologyThe cross is the core of Christian faith and the foundation of salvation theology. Historically, the cross was a Roman execution device used to punish criminals; however, in Christian faith, the cross becomes a sign of God's grace (Witoto, 2024). Paul asserts that the cross is "foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Thus, the cross presents a paradox: an instrument of humiliation that becomes a channel of salvation.

The early Church Fathers understood the cross as a symbol of Christ's victory over sin and the power of death (Mamahit, 2004). Irenaeus, for example, emphasized that the cross is a form of recapitulatio, that is, the restoration of all creation in Christ (Angelo, 2019). In Augustine's view, the cross reveals God's love, who is willing to descend into human suffering to lift humanity back to Him (Hery & M., n.d.). This perspective was continued by the Reformers, such as Martin Luther, who emphasized the *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) as the primary way to know God hidden in the suffering of Christ (Sahardjo, 2020).

Thus, the cross is not merely a historical event, but a profound theological reality. It reveals God's radical love, while also being the irreplaceable center of Christian soteriology.

The Cross as Suffering and Redemption

The cross in Christian tradition is primarily understood as the pinnacle of the deepest suffering (Ohoitumur, n.d.). Crucifixion was the most humiliating and painful form of punishment in the Roman era, intended for serious criminals and slaves (Yonatan & Joseph, 2020). Through this means, Christ entered into the deepest human suffering, experiencing humiliation, physical pain, and existential separation from God. In the cry 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' (Matt. 27:46), Jesus shows that His suffering was not only physical suffering but also spiritual suffering, illustrating God's full solidarity with human suffering. Thus, the cross becomes the epitome of the bitter reality of human life, as well as evidence that God is not distant from the suffering of His people.

However, the suffering of the cross is not the end of the story. Through His death on the cross, Jesus actually brings about a work of redemption that reconciles humanity with God. The Apostle Paul affirms that through Christ's cross, human sins are nailed down and the power of death is defeated (Col. 2:14-15). The suffering borne by Jesus becomes a means to redeem humanity from the punishment of sin, while also opening the way to salvation (John et al., 2024). This is the paradox of the cross: something that appears lowly and full of suffering, actually becomes an instrument of salvation and glory (Pastor, n.d.). By embracing that suffering, Christ transforms the cross from a symbol of disgrace into a sign of victory and redemption that brings new life to all who believe.

Classical Theological Views on the Cross (Paul, Church Fathers, Reformers)

In the view of Apostle Paul, the cross is the core of the proclamation of the Gospel and the foundation of Christian theology. For Paul, the cross is evidence of God's love manifested in the sacrifice of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, he affirms that 'the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.' Paul sees that through the cross, human sin is nailed (Colossians 2:14), thus reconciling humans with God (Romans 5:10). This perspective emphasizes the soteriological aspect: Christ's suffering on the cross is the path to redemption and the basis for the resurrection, which is then understood as the pinnacle of Christ's glory.

The early Church Fathers also placed significant emphasis on the meaning of the cross. Ignatius of Antioch, for example, viewed the cross as a means of uniting the faithful with Christ (Silvanus, 2024), while Irenaeus emphasized the aspect of recapitulatio (recapitulation), which is that through Christ's obedience to death on the cross, all humanity is restored from Adam's disobedience (Widodo, n.d.). Athanasius of Alexandria added that the crucifixion was God's way of defeating the power of death, with Christ offering Himself to destroy death from within (Jessika & Hendi, 2024). Thus, for the Church Fathers, the cross was not only a sign of suffering but also a cosmic instrument that transforms human history.

This view was further developed during the time of Augustine, who emphasized the aspect of love in the cross. According to him, the cross reveals God's immense love, so much so that God was willing to enter into human

suffering to save His people. The cross is understood not merely as a tragedy, but as a divine mystery that unites God's justice and love. Augustine also observed that Christ's suffering on the cross serves as an example for believers in bearing the trials of life, while directing their gaze toward the hope of eternal glory (Pdt & S., n.d.). Thus, the cross holds profound spiritual significance and serves as the central focus of the early Church's teaching on faith.

During the Reformation, theological views on the cross were reaffirmed by figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. Luther introduced the concept of *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross), which emphasizes that God reveals Himself through the weakness and suffering of Christ, in contrast to the *theologia gloriae* (theology of glory) that seeks God in power and triumph (Hery & M., n.d.). Calvin, on the other hand, emphasized the redemptive aspect of the cross: that Christ bore the punishment for sin on behalf of humanity, allowing humans to obtain justification before God (Septania et al., 2025). Thus, both Luther and Calvin viewed the cross not only as the center of salvation history but also as a principle that corrects the understanding of theology and Christian faith life.

They both understood that the cross is not only a symbol of suffering, but also a symbol of God's infinite power and love. In their view, human salvation cannot be achieved by human effort alone, but through God's grace revealed through the death and resurrection of Christ. Salvation is a gift given to humanity selflessly, as evidence of God's boundless faithful love.

2. Theology of Glory (Theologia Gloriam)

The theology of glory in the Christian tradition is often understood in various ways. In a historical context, Martin Luther criticized the *theologia gloriae* as a way of thinking that seeks to know God through power, wisdom, or worldly glory, without going through the way of the cross. According to Luther, such a path of glory is misleading, because only through the suffering of the cross can God be truly known (Lukito, 2002).

However, the understanding of glory cannot be separated from the glorified Christ. In the Gospel of John, the moment of the Son of Man's "glorification" occurs precisely when He is lifted up on the cross (John 12:23). Thus, glory does not eliminate suffering but is present in and through suffering. In Paul's theology, this is evident in Philippians 2:5-11, where Christ's humility and obedience to death on a cross ultimately lead to His exaltation by God.

Hans Urs von Balthasar enriches this understanding with his theological-aesthetic perspective, that the glory of God is manifested most beautifully precisely in the mystery of the cross (IMAJI & RELEVANSINYA, 2020). Likewise, Moltmann emphasizes that the crucified God is the God who glorifies suffering by bringing hope within it (Emanuel, 2021). From this perspective, the theology of glory is not the opposite of the theology of the cross, but rather an aspect that completes it.

Definition of the Theology of Glory

The theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) is a theological approach that emphasizes aspects of victory, majesty, and the greatness of God manifested in signs of human strength and success (B. & Julianus, n.d.). Within this framework,

God is primarily understood as a powerful, exalted, and glorified deity through His great works that are outwardly visible. This theology tends to view suffering, weakness, and failure as contrary to God's nature. Therefore, in practice, the theology of glory is often associated with the pursuit of faith experiences that emphasize achievement, success, and manifestations of divine power that are visibly evident in human life.

The Origin of the Term

The term *theologia gloriae* was first critically developed by Martin Luther in the early 16th century, particularly in the *Disputatio Heidelbergensis* (Aritonang, n.d.). In his theses, Luther used this term to describe the tendency of scholastic theology and the church of his time to prioritize the power of human reason, moral achievement, and the pursuit of human glory in understanding God. According to Luther, the theology of glory is misleading because it seeks to find God through human wisdom and worldly success, whereas God reveals Himself fully in the suffering of Christ on the cross (B. & Julianus, n.d.). Since then, the term *theologia gloriae* has been understood in theological tradition as the opposite of *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross), which emphasizes that the glory of God is manifested through the suffering of Christ, not apart from or outside of it.

Comparison With Theologia Crucis (Theology of the Cross)

The fundamental difference between *theologia gloriae* (theology of glory) and *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) lies in the way of perceiving God and His work of salvation. The theology of glory seeks God in signs of strength, human success, and triumph. God is understood primarily in terms of His visible greatness and victories, so that suffering and weakness are seen as inconsistent with the divine nature. In contrast, the theology of the cross emphasizes that God reveals Himself through the suffering of Christ on the cross. The cross becomes a place of paradox, where Christ's human weakness is the manifestation of God's true power. Thus, for Martin Luther, the theology of glory tends to ignore the reality of suffering, while the theology of the cross confronts suffering as the way in which God's glory is revealed (Pdt, n.d.).

The implications are very significant for the Christian faith. The theology of glory can lead humans to seek a faith experience centered on worldly success and victory, which risks producing a shallow and triumphalist faith. Meanwhile, the theology of the cross teaches humility, solidarity with human suffering, and the recognition that salvation is not the result of human strength, but the grace of God through the crucified Christ. Paul himself emphasizes this in 1 Corinthians 1:18–25, that the cross is 'foolishness' to the world, but 'the power of God' to those who are being saved. Therefore, the theology of the cross is not only a critique of the theology of glory, but also a path to keep the Christian faith realistic, profound, and rooted in the love of God revealed in Christ's sacrifice..

The Eschatological Aspect of the Glory of Christ

The eschatological aspect of Christ's glory is closely related to the hope for the full realization of the work of salvation at the end of time (Subandrijo, 2020). From a biblical perspective, Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven mark the beginning of His eschatological glory. As the Head of the Church, Christ reigns from on high, and His glory serves as a guarantee that all of God's promises will be fulfilled. Paul affirms in Philippians 2:9-11 that God "highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name," indicating that suffering on the cross is not the end, but rather the gateway to eternal glory. Thus, Christ's glory has a dimension that transcends present human history and points to eschatological fulfillment in the future.

In addition, this eschatological aspect is also related to the hope of believers (Setulus & Aprianus, 2024). The glory of Christ serves as an example and a guarantee that those who believe will partake in the new life promised by God. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:17 that those who are children of God will also be heirs, "brothers and sisters of Christ, sharing in suffering, so that they may also be glorified together." Thus, the suffering experienced by Christians today is not in vain, as it will result in an eschatological transformation in accordance with the glory of Christ.

Furthermore, the eschatological aspect of Christ's glory affirms the universal dimension of salvation (Lamuji, 2025). His glory is not only for Jesus Himself but also carries implications for all creation. The Book of Revelation emphasizes that at the end of time, all things will be subjected under Christ's feet (Rev. 11:15), and every eye will witness the fulfillment of God's glory. This indicates that Christ's glory has both a cosmic and personal scope: for believing individuals, this glory is the hope of new life; for all creation, the glory of Christ marks the fulfillment of God's purpose for the world. The eschatology of Christ's glory affirms that suffering is not the end of history, but a stage toward the realization of the eternal divine promise (Resna et al., 2024).

3. Theological Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, in its classical sense, is the art of interpreting texts. However, in the context of theology, hermeneutics is not only about interpreting the Scriptures but also about understanding the faith experiences of believers in the light of the Gospel. Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasizes that understanding arises from a "fusion of horizons" between the text and the reader, making every reading inherently dialogical and contextual (Julio et al., 2025).

In terms of the cross and glory, hermeneutics serves to interpret the dialectic between the suffering and exaltation of Christ. The cross should not be seen merely literally as an event of death, but should also be understood symbolically, soteriologically, and eschatologically. Hermeneutics helps the faithful understand that Christ's suffering has a universal meaning: not merely a tragedy, but a path toward eternal glory. Furthermore, theological hermeneutics opens up space for contextual reading. This means that the meaning of the cross and glory can be reinterpreted in the context of modern human suffering. Thus, hermeneutics is not only academic but also pastoral, helping the faithful find hope amid suffering by looking to Christ who is both crucified and glorified.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method (library research). The qualitative approach was chosen because the subject of study is conceptual and theological in nature, rather than empirical. The main focus of this research is to interpret the theological meaning of the cross and the glory of Christ through the study of texts and literature, rather than through field data collection. According to Habsy (2017), in *Understanding Qualitative Research in Guidance and Counseling*, the qualitative approach is used to understand phenomena in their natural context, emphasizing aspects of meaning and interpretation. This aligns with the character of theological research, which seeks to uncover messages of faith through symbols and religious narratives. Thus, the qualitative method allows the researcher to explore the spiritual and theological meanings contained in the Scriptures in a deep and reflective manner.

Next, the literature study method is used to trace and analyze both classical and modern theological works relevant to the research theme. According to Manurung (2022), in his article *Observing the Use of Qualitative Methods in Theological College Environments*, the literature study method is an appropriate approach in building theological arguments based on written sources, both primary and secondary. The primary sources in this study include biblical texts that speak about the cross and glory, such as John 12:23–28 and Philippians 2:5–11, as well as works by major theologians such as Luther (1960) and Moltmann (1974, *The Crucified God*). Meanwhile, secondary sources were obtained from books and academic journals, such as Fanni et al. (2025) in *Theology of the Cross as a Paradigm of Christian Life in the Postmodern Era*, and Limbong (2024) in *Spiritual Transformation from Suffering to Glory in the Perspective of Isaiah 50:4–11*.

The main methodological framework in this study is the hermeneutic approach, which is the art and science of interpreting texts. Hermeneutics is used to understand the deepest meaning of biblical texts that discuss the suffering and glory of Christ. This approach follows the principles developed by Gadamer (1975) in **Truth and Method**, which asserts that understanding arises from the encounter between the world of the text and the world of the reader, also known as the 'fusion of horizons.' Thus, the researcher not only reads the Scriptures historically but also interprets their messages in the context of contemporary believers' lives. The hermeneutic approach in this study is descriptive, interpretative, and contextual. Descriptively, this study outlines the textual meaning of the events of the cross and glory; interpretively, it interprets the theological message of Christ's suffering for modern believers; and contextually, it relates this meaning to contemporary human experiences of suffering. This perspective aligns with the thinking of (Thiselton, 2009) in *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, which asserts that authentic theological interpretation must connect the meaning of the biblical text with the context of modern readers to remain relevant and existential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hermeneutic Analysis

1. The Cross as Suffering

The cross must first be understood in the dimension of real suffering (Manullang, 2020). The crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Golgotha was the most disgraceful execution in Roman times, intended for major criminals and political rebels. The innocent Jesus was treated as cursed, as written in the Torah: "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Deut. 21:23; cf. Gal. 3:13). This suffering was not only physical but also psychological and spiritual. Jesus was abandoned by His disciples, mocked by many, and even cried out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

The hermeneutics of suffering reveal that God in Christ participates in the depths of human suffering. Jürgen Moltmann emphasizes in *The Crucified God* that it is on the cross that God is present in the most radical way, not as a God distant from suffering, but as a God who suffers with humanity (Thauwrisan, 2021). This perspective provides a new meaning: Christ's suffering is not merely a weakness, but an expression of God's solidarity with a wounded world.

The Existential Dimension of Christ's Suffering.

Christ's suffering has an existential dimension because He truly entered the human reality of fragility, feeling physical pain, rejection, fear, and even loneliness. His cry on the cross, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' (Matt. 27:46), shows that His suffering was not merely symbolic, but a real experience that made God present within the depths of human suffering. Thus, no aspect of human suffering is foreign to Christ.

Moreover, the suffering of Christ is a form of God's solidarity with humanity. He suffered not for Himself, but so that believing humans may find comfort and strength in life's struggles. The suffering of Christ also invites believers to participate in carrying the cross, as emphasized by Paul in *Philippians 3:10*. Therefore, the suffering of Christ is not only a historical event, but also an experience of faith that provides meaning, comfort, and hope.

The Soteriological Meaning of Suffering

The soteriological meaning of Christ's suffering lies in the fact that through His suffering, Jesus accomplished the work of redemption for humanity (Tran, 2025). The cross is not only a symbol of suffering but also God's means of reconciling the world to Himself. The Apostle Paul affirms that through Christ's death, humans who once lived in sin are reconciled to God (*Rom. 5:10*), and through His wounds, humanity receives healing (*Isa. 53:5*). Thus, Christ's suffering has redemptive value: He bears the punishment for human sin, so that humanity receives salvation as a gift.

Furthermore, the suffering of Christ provides a foundation for the transformation of the believer's life (Andri et al., 2025). The cross teaches that salvation is not the result of human effort, but solely because of God's love and grace (*Eph. 2:8-9*). The suffering that Christ endured serves as assurance that sin has been conquered and the power of death has been broken. Therefore, the suffering of Christ functions not only as a historical event but also as a theological

foundation that shapes the identity of Christians: living in forgiveness, being grateful for the gift of salvation, and being called to live in love and sacrifice similar to Christ.

2. The Cross as the Way to Glory

Although the cross is suffering, the Scriptures affirm that this suffering becomes the path to glory. The Gospel of John reveals that the moment Jesus was crucified was also the moment He was glorified: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (John 12:23). Thus, the cross is not the end of a tragedy, but rather the entrance into the reality of God's glory. Paul reinforces this in Philippians 2:5-11. Christ, who was obedient to the point of death on the cross, was exalted by God and given a name above every name. Hermeneutics of this text shows that Christ's obedience in suffering is the reason for His exaltation. In other words, the cross is not an obstacle to glory, but an absolute requirement. This affirms a dialectical theological pattern: the glory of Christ cannot be understood apart from His suffering (Yayuk et al., 2025).

Hans Urs von Balthasar refers to the cross as the *locus gloriae*, the place where the glory of God appears paradoxically (P, n.d.). Glory is not something that comes after suffering ends, but is present within the suffering itself. This is what makes the cross not merely a symbol of sorrow, but a sign of victory.

The Paradox of the Cross and Glory in the Gospel of John and Paul

In the Gospel of John, the cross is understood not only as suffering but also as the moment when the glory of Christ begins. Jesus himself said: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (John 12:23), referring to the crucifixion as a path to glory. This paradox shows that suffering and humiliation are not the opposite of glory, but rather part of God's plan to reveal His love and glory (Deden et al., 2025). For John, Jesus' death on the cross is the clearest revelation of God's glory, because it is precisely through that humiliation that God's love is manifested for the world.

Meanwhile, Paul emphasizes the same paradox in stronger language. For the world, the cross is foolishness and a stumbling block, but for believers, the cross is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18, 23-24). Paul sees that Christ's suffering is the path to exaltation and victory, as expressed in the Christ hymn (Phil. 2:8-11), that Christ's obedience unto death on the cross is the basis for His exaltation to glory. Thus, both John and Paul show that the cross and glory are not separate, but rather interconnected in one mystery: Christ's suffering becomes the very gateway to His glory.

Philippians 2:5-11: Suffering as Obedience that Leads to Glory

The Christ hymn in Philippians 2:5-11 profoundly portrays that Christ's suffering is not merely a human tragedy, but an expression of complete obedience to God. Paul emphasizes that Jesus, who has the very nature of God, willingly emptied Himself (*kenosis*), took the form of a servant, and was obedient to death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8). This act demonstrates that Christ's suffering is rooted in a conscious decision to submit to God's will for the salvation of

humanity. Suffering is not a sign of weakness, but the most radical form of obedience, in which Christ identifies with lowly and fragile humanity.

As a result of this obedience, God exalted Him to the highest place and bestowed upon Him a name above every name (Phil. 2:9–11). This affirms that suffering is not the end of Christ's story, but a path to glory. His full obedience in suffering becomes the basis for the universal acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is Lord. Thus, this passage illustrates the relationship between suffering and glory: suffering as the path of obedience results in exaltation and cosmic recognition of Christ's authority. This paradigm also serves as an example for believers to emulate the humility and obedience of Christ in their lives (Hidayat, 2017).

3. The Dialectic of Suffering and Glory

The cross and glory are not two separate stages, but two sides of one reality of Christ. Dialectical hermeneutics shows that suffering and glory interpret each other: suffering gains its meaning because it leads to glory, while glory gains its weight because it is born from suffering. Without the cross, glory would fall into empty triumphalism; without glory, the cross would only be a tragedy without hope. The cross is a reality of humanity, because it represents a human nature that cannot be denied or rejected. The cross is the pinnacle of God's glory, and it is there that God's glory is further revealed. The experience of crucifixion brings humans into the divine because they behold the Crucified One. The cross is an event of encounter between the center of humanity, the soul, and the very center of God. The beauty of understanding is a property of God, and the pinnacle of that beauty is God's glory. The cross is the pinnacle of God's glory, and it is there that God's glory is further revealed (Barth, 2004). The experience of the cross brings humans into the divine because they look upon the Crucified One.

This dialectic has existential implications for believers. Human life is often marked by suffering, but faith in Christ helps believers see suffering from the perspective of hope (Mathias & Antonius, 2022). The cross teaches that suffering is not the ultimate goal, but rather a path toward transformation. Thus, believers are called to take up their cross daily (Luke 9:23), yet with the conviction that the cross will bear fruit in glory with Christ (Romans 8:17). In the context of hermeneutics, the dialectic of the cross and glory expands theological understanding. Suffering is no longer read as the absurdity of life, but as part of God's salvation plan. Christ's glory, in turn, becomes a guarantee that human suffering is not in vain, but will be redeemed and transformed by the power of the resurrection.

Theological Implications, Challenges, and Contextual Relevance

1. Theological Implications of Glory on the Understanding of the Cross

The theology of glory, when properly understood, helps Christians see that the cross is not merely a symbol of suffering, but also a sign of God's victory. The crucifixion of Christ is not a defeat, but the pinnacle of obedience that leads to the glory of resurrection and ascension. The implication of this understanding

is that Christian faith does not stop at suffering but moves toward the hope of restoration and victory in Christ.

However, the theology of glory also carries risks if separated from the cross. If it only emphasizes victory, glory, and greatness, the cross could potentially be seen merely as a stepping stone, rather than the core of the work of salvation. This can give rise to a triumphalist form of spirituality that neglects suffering as part of the journey of faith (Anjaya, 2021). Therefore, the understanding of the theology of glory must always be in dialogue with the theology of the cross to maintain balance.

2. Hermeneutic Challenges in Understanding the Relationship Between Suffering and Glory

In biblical interpretation, one of the greatest challenges is understanding the relationship between suffering and glory in its entirety. From a human perspective, suffering is often seen as something contrary to glory. However, the texts of the Scriptures, particularly the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul, affirm that the two are actually closely interconnected.

Hermeneutical challenges arise when interpreters or believers only choose one side: emphasizing suffering without glory will lead to spiritual pessimism; conversely, emphasizing glory without suffering will lead to shallow spirituality. Therefore, a balanced hermeneutic needs to consider the relationship between both within a dialectical framework: suffering is the path, glory is the goal, but both are present simultaneously in the experience of faith (Lefebure, n.d.). In addition, the reader's context also affects how this relationship is understood. For example, a Christian community experiencing persecution may emphasize the aspect of suffering more, while a community living in comfort may emphasize the aspect of glory. Contextual hermeneutics is needed so that the message of the cross and glory remains relevant and does not lose its meaning for contemporary readers.

3. Contextual Relevance for the Faithful Life Today

The relationship between the cross and glory holds great relevance in the life of contemporary Christian faith. In a world filled with suffering – whether due to injustice, poverty, war, or existential crises – the cross affirms that God is present amid suffering. God does not distance Himself from humans, but rather shares in their wounds and life struggles. This provides comfort and strength, assuring that suffering is not the end of life's story (Fanni et al., 2025).

At the same time, the glory of Christ teaches that suffering is not in vain. The resurrection becomes a guarantee that suffering will be transformed into new life. For contemporary Christians, this means a call to bear the cross with faith, while living in the hope of the promised glory. Such spirituality prevents believers from falling into despair, but also ensures that faith does not get caught up in spiritual luxury that ignores the reality of suffering.

Thus, the dialectic of the cross and glory becomes a pattern of faith that is relevant: bearing the daily cross in faithfulness while awaiting the glory of Christ that will be revealed. This relevance affirms that Christian faith is a faith that is

realistic about suffering, yet optimistic because it is rooted in the promise of the resurrection.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

First, the cross in Christian theology is not merely a symbol of suffering, but also the center of God's work of salvation. Through Jesus' suffering on the cross, God demonstrates His solidarity with suffering humanity. The hermeneutics of suffering affirms that God is not distant from human reality, but present in the depths of that very suffering.

Secondly, the cross must be understood dialectically with glory. Christ's suffering cannot be separated from His resurrection and ascension. The cross is the path to glory, and glory gains its weight because it is born from suffering. This hermeneutic shows that suffering and glory are not two separate things, but two sides of a single reality that interpret each other.

Third, the theology of glory can only be properly understood when it dialectically engages with the theology of the cross. If either is excessively emphasized, it will lead to a skewed understanding: an emphasis on suffering without glory leads to pessimism, while an emphasis on glory without the cross gives rise to spiritual triumphalism. Therefore, hermeneutical balance is very important.

Fourth, in the context of contemporary faith life, the dialectic of suffering and glory remains relevant. The suffering experienced by humans—both personally and collectively—can be understood in the light of Christ's cross. At the same time, the promise of glory provides hope that suffering is never in vain but will be transformed by the power of the resurrection.

Thus, a hermeneutical study of the cross and glory affirms that Christian faith is a faith that faithfully bears the reality of suffering, yet at the same time lives in the hope of Christ's glory. This is the balance that must continually be maintained in both theology and the practice of Christian life.

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