

Taking Up Your Cross

Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV) — 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

Matthew 16:24–27 (NKJV) — 24 Then Jesus said to His **disciples**, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him (1) deny himself, and (2) take up his cross, and (3) follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

To follow Jesus, we must do three things:
(1) deny ourselves
(2) take up our cross
(3) follow him

TO FOLLOW JESUS, WE MUST LEARN TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS!

I. **Definition and understanding of the Cross** - understood from the preceding **10 verses**

Matthew 16:13–23 (NKJV) — 13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” 14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The recognition and confession of Jesus being Christ the Messiah would be the basis upon which the church would be established and power would be given to it. But along with the power he also let them know it would come with a cost. We shall see what he explains to them about the cost to establish the kingdom.

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. 21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, **and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.**

22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

We do not like the possibility of suffering...Ever!

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, *(NIV stumbling block)* for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Jesus was about to go the way of the cross. Peter who had just made a great revelation of the power of Jesus rebuked him about speaking in such a negative way, but Peter did not understand the ways of God.

Matthew 16:24–27 (NKJV) — 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him (1) deny himself, and (2) take up his cross, and (3) follow Me.

- A. Again, what did Jesus say if any man was to come after him?
1. Deny himself,
 2. take up his cross, and
 3. follow him.
- B. We must take up our cross. What is it? Again, to further prove my point, let us understand it from the words of Christ just before he was to be crucified.

John 12:23–33 (NKJV) — 23 But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, *(there is the denial of self – losing one’s life to find it)* it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him *follow Me;* *(How?)* and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

27 “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? **But for this purpose, I came to this hour.**

1. To be crucified on the cross at Calvary was the purpose Jesus came into the world.

THE CROSS REPRESENTS THE MISSION GOD HAD PURPOSED FOR JESUS

2. The cross represents the mission God had purposed for Jesus. He was to live his life for the single-purpose of giving his life as a ransom so that you and I might have life. The way of the cross was the plan of God.
3. What we see from Jesus is that the way of the cross is the plan for every man who intends to follow him.
 - a. Therefore, if you intend to follow Christ you must be willing to **take up your individual cross!**

IF YOU INTEND TO FOLLOW CHRIST

THE ONLY WAY IS TO TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

4. Jesus was crucified on the cross alone. Therefore, the cross is a purpose and mission God has call you to. It is a lonely place to be. Jesus hung there by himself.
 - a. A person who carries a cross, carries the cross by themselves.
 - b. Don't expect a lot of people to be with you!
Remember, the road is narrow that leads to life and there are few find it.
 - c. God calls each of us to an individual mission.
 - (1) Then, each of us must stand to give an account to him as to whether we fulfilled our mission or not.

C. Our cross is the mission and purpose in life that God has given us.
**OUR CROSS IS THE MISSION AND PURPOSE THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US IN LIFE.
WE CANNOT EXPECT OTHERS TO BEAR THE CROSS HE HAS ASSIGNED TO US**

1. That is the very reason he established his church and gave us apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor teachers to perfect us in the works of service for our generation.
 - a. A person cannot stay out of the church and think that he can accomplish and fulfill the will of God!
 - b. He established his church and then told his disciples if they would come after him they would have to deny themselves, take up their cross and then follow him
2. He has given to each of us gifts. These are an indication of how he wants us to live our lives in service to others. It is in the church that we practice and develop those gifts.
 - a. We must remember ultimately

WE DON'T LIVE THIS LIFE TO BENEFIT OURSELVES,

WE LIVE THIS LIFE TO GIVE AND BRING GLORY TO GOD

- D. Sadly, some people will never know their cross(mission/purpose) to take it up because they have not completed step 1 of denying themselves.
1. They do not hear the voice of God clearly because the voice of self cries out more loudly.
 2. Their emotions, their way of thinking, their feelings, their beliefs, all get in the way of hearing the voice of God.
 - a. Just like self cried out in the garden and both Adam and Eve disobeyed the voice of God.
 - b. Like Esau who sold his birthright to receive instant gratification
 - c. Like the story of the rich man that would not follow Christ because he was rich
 - d. Like Judas, who sold Jesus out for a few pieces of silver.
 - e. I could go on and on about people who did not fulfill their divine potential simply because they were more concerned about their personal benefit than the glory of God
 3. In these last days, Guiding Light should be a church that's willing to stand as a pillar of truth proclaiming the word of God in a world of darkness!

GUIDING LIGHT SHOULD BE A CHURCH THAT'S WILLING TO STAND AS A PILLAR OF TRUTH PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS!

4. How many times have each of us known the right thing to do but something inside tells us something else to do?
 - a. How many of us want to do right, but we still end up doing wrong?
 - b. No man can serve two masters!
Matthew 6:24 (NKJV) — 24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

YOU CANNOT SERVE THE GOD OF SELF AND THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE AT THE SAME TIME!

5. Too many people in the church are seeking self-glorification and pleasure with no cross.

- a. They go to churches to be served rather than to learn how to serve. As a result, many of them will be last in the kingdom of God.

2 Timothy 4:3 (NKJV) — 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*

- b. Our example is Christ we are to be servants not to be served.

- E. Jesus did not promise this life without trouble. We were told we would have trouble in the world and the world would hate us if we serve him!

John 15:18–21 (NKJV) — 18 “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated you.* 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, **because they do not know Him who sent Me.****

1. Too many people want the world to love them and are fearful of the world more than they are respectful of the word of God.

2. As a Christian, you should not be worried about how the world will respond to you. The world is not your God!

Matthew 5:10–12 (NKJV) — 10 Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

11 “Blessed are you **when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

F. We are clearly told to let our light shine so that men might see our good works. But, if we let our light shine and men see our good works then they will hate us also.

1. For this reason, many do not let their light shine.
 - a. Some of you are those very people

**DON'T FEAR THE WORLD, THE WORLD CAN ONLY KILL YOU
BUT FEAR HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DESTROY YOUR BODY & SOUL IN HELL**

2. How many of you today are fearful of what others might say if you stood for the truth?

- a. What is the truth? The truth is the word of God!
Unfortunately, too many of us can't handle the truth!

G. In this generation, there are certain things that have become acceptable to this generation, but they are not acceptable in the word of God.

For instance, how many of you are ashamed to speak the word of God regarding

1. **Fornication** – everybody is expected to do it now. *It doesn't matter what the Bible says anymore. I am right or am I wrong?*
2. **Same sex marriage** – we can love and marry whoever we want now. *It doesn't matter what the Bible says anymore. I am right or am I wrong?*
3. **Abortion** – It's about the right of the mother, not the child. *It doesn't matter what the Bible says anymore. I am right or am I wrong?*
4. **Political Parties** – We vote according to party lines. *It doesn't matter what the Bible says anymore. I am right or am I wrong?*

H. Let me let you know every Christian's responsibility – *To be a witness of the words of Christ*

DON'T ALLOW YOUR PERSONAL FAILURES TO KEEP YOU FROM SPEAKING THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD.

1. Remember, except for Christ, God has never had a perfect messenger to carry his message.
 - a. Both Moses and David were murderers, but God used them in a mighty way. If he could use them he can use you!
 - b. It is your first priority in life to determine you're calling from God and take up your cross and follow him!

I. To do the right thing will cost you!

1. It may cost you your friends.

2. It may cost you your popularity.
3. It may even cost you your life.
4. It is the cross you have to bear but
 - a. if you do not take up your cross you will not be able to follow Christ.

IF YOU DO NOT TAKE UP YOUR CROSS YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FOLLOW CHRIST

J. Jesus said, what does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his very soul?

K. No cross that Christ has for you is too heavy for you to bear. If he has given it to you, you will be anointed by the power of God to bear up under it. You will never know this until you step out on faith to do the right thing!

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV) — 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

THE ANOINTING TO CARRY YOUR CROSS IS ALSO THE ANOINTING TO BREAK THE YOKE OF OPPRESSION FROM THE WORLD!

L. To do what God would have you to do, requires you most of all, to have faith.

1. Faith in God! That very same faith that you develop, forged by the trials and tribulations inflicted upon you by the world, will be the faith that gives you the victory over the world and it's persecutions.

FAITH FORGED BY THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE WORLD IS FAITH THAT GIVES YOU THE VICTORY OVER THE WORLD

II. It is time for us to decide are we willing to carry the cross for Jesus or must Jesus bear the cross alone?

A.

*Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me.
The consecrated cross I'll bear, till death shall set me free and then go home my crown to wear for there's a crown for me.*

NO CROSS NO CROWN!

B. This should remind us how we should be willing to stand, *fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set*

before him endured the cross, despising the shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:2

- C. There is a crown that awaits everyone that carries the cross calls them to bear!
- D. The angel Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1:32-33 Jesus would be given the throne of David and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there would be no end.
 - 1. Mary watched Jesus for 33 years but she did not see him proclaimed King until he hung on the cross in a sign above him said this is Jesus King of the Jews!

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