

## **“Take Up Your Cross Daily and Follow Me”**

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.  
<sup>24</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. <sup>25</sup>  
What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? <sup>26</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Luke 9:23-26 niv

Honestly, doesn't Jesus sometimes sound unrealistic in His expectations of us - - like He doesn't understand the realities of our life on earth and the pressures we face as we try to be good Christians? Isn't it easy for us to sort of skip over His strong words because of the discomfort they cause if we stop to look at them seriously?

Let's take a phrase-by-phrase look inside this text and try to see if it is something that we actually do want to take seriously!

If anyone would, - includes everyone; implies active and purposeful choice

come - implies motion from one place to another

after me – follow me, come behind me

he must - an imperative

deny - disown, forsake, renounce, put away,

himself – his “self”, i.e. the fleshly self-rule that rises up from within;

and take up - to lift up, to raise; implies being active and deliberate

his - whose cross?

cross - what does the cross symbolize? (see notes that follow)

daily - how often? (Why daily?)

and follow me. - implies following in His mindset; His values; His definition of what makes life good; and His purpose-driven life. It is from the inside out. It starts with a Master/servant relationship and goes far beyond just trying to mimic Jesus in the things He did or in treating people as He did.

<sup>24</sup>For whoever wants to save – “save” means to deliver from danger or suffering,

his life - (psuche), soul; “the good life” as determined by his fleshly mind, will, and emotion. (not soma, meaning body or physical life; or pneuma, meaning spirit)

will lose it, - will destroy or kill what is actually the “good life.” Really - - how well does it work when we insist on doing things our way instead of God's way? Do we gain or do we lose when we chose bitterness over forgiveness?

but whoever loses his life – whoever destroys or kills the rule of the fleshly mind, will and emotions, and gives up his right to determine what makes life good for me - Kjv, for my sake (more accurate)

will save it. – will actually protect the good life that God has for us instead of walking in the futility of trying to do things our own way!

<sup>25</sup>What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? - A good question that deserves an answer!

<sup>26</sup>If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, - Not just being ashamed to pray before eating in a restaurant, or to “witness for Christ.” It means, “Are we willing to follow Jesus and to be separated from the ‘world’ in a way that draws misunderstanding and possibly disdain from others, even some family and Christian friends? Are we willing pay a price to be His bond-slaves; to live in accordance with His words; and to serve His purpose of making Himself known to the ends of the earth?

the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. - What a price to pay - - and all so we can maintain control of our life instead of surrendering to Him! This is for real!

### **The “Right”**

Adam and Eve's act of rebellion against God was in their decision to take upon themselves the right to decide what made life good, instead of just obeying Him. It is only in our decision to renounce that right and instead obey God, that the power of our inherited sinfulness is broken so we can experience real life.

At its very core, to “save our life” means to protect the flesh-driven life. To “take up our cross daily” means to “crucify the flesh” (Gal. 5:24, Rom. 8:13, Col. 3:5) by refusing its voice as we surrender to the rule of God again and again. That opens the door to the abundant life that we were created to enjoy and which we so often seek in exactly the wrong way!

### **The Message of the Cross**

What is the message of the cross that Paul speaks of in I Cor. 1:18; “For 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”? Why is it foolishness to some, and how does it become power to us?

Thomas a Kempis sees “the cross” as being the place where we trade our wretchedness for the wonders of godliness. Speaking for the heart of God, he says, “If you wish to obtain the blessed life, despise this present life. If you desire to be exalted in Heaven, humble yourself in this world. If you will to reign with Me, bear the Cross with Me. For only the servants of the Cross find the life of Blessedness and of true light.”<sup>1</sup>

The message of the cross doesn’t only convey the evangelistic nature of the cross, important as that is. It includes the larger sense of what the cross implied for Jesus and its parallel implications for us in terms of agony, death, and new life in accordance with the purposes and power of God.

The April 6 devotional in Oswald Chambers’ “My Utmost for His Highest” says, “The Cross is the point where God and sinful man merge with a crash and the way to life is opened - -.” In his April 12 meditation Chambers says “The life that was in Jesus is made ours by means of His Cross when once we make the decision to be identified with Him.” For August 6 he asserts, “The cross stands for one thing only for us -- a complete and entire and absolute identification with the Lord Jesus Christ - - .”

On November 18 Chambers says, “We are designed with a great capacity for God; and sin and our individuality are the things that keep us from getting at God. God delivers us from sin: we have to deliver ourselves from individuality, i.e., to present our natural life to God and sacrifice it until it is transformed into a spiritual life by obedience. It is what Paul means in Gal. 2:20 ‘I have been crucified with Christ’ - his

natural individuality has been broken and his personality united with his lord, - -.”

For Jesus, and for us, “the cross” symbolizes the laying down of human desires and expectations, and the embracing of God’s purposes. Of this, Chambers says in the August 6 portion, “Surrender is not the surrender of the external life, but of the will; when that is done, all is done. There are very few crises in life; the great crisis is the surrender of the will”, adding, “It is a question of being united with Jesus in His death until nothing ever appeals to you that did not appeal to Him.” He continues, “After surrender - - what? The whole of life after surrender is an aspiration for unbroken communion with God.”

### **Ending Thought**

Regardless of the degree to which it has been accepted, “the way of the cross” has always been the standard for Biblical Christianity. God offers no alternatives. There are no other paths to obedience; the abundant life; or fruitful service to our Lord.

Although American Christians have heretofore been able to survive as “respectable Christians” by our own definition of that, we are anemic personally and are having a minimal effect upon our nation - - and often, even our neighbors. If we were to take seriously “the day we live in” and become radical (“authentic”) followers of Jesus, and if things stayed just as they are right now in America and we were able to still “do church” for another 50 years, nothing would have been wasted because we would only have become what we were called to be all along anyway!

### **Notes:**

- Some borrowed from: The Word of the Cross - - The Power of God, [www.john2031.com/sgb/17.html](http://www.john2031.com/sgb/17.html)
- <sup>1</sup>a Kempis, Thomas, Of The Imitation Of Christ, selections. Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1963, p59

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