

Mt 16:24-28, Mk 8:34-38, Lk 9:23-27

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me

Introduction

1. Three Truths and Two Theological Positions
 - a. Who is Jesus? The Christ, the Son of the Living God
 - b. What has Jesus come to do? Die for sinners and raise from the dead
 - i. A Theology of the Cross – Jesus will suffer and die, and be raised on the third day for sinners who cannot obey God’s Law
 - ii. A Theology of Glory – Man does not need a Deliverer, for he is good enough and smart enough to achieve victory without the Cross of Christ
 - c. Today: What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ & follow Him?

Main Idea Following Christ means to place your allegiance solely with Jesus, denying yourself worldly pleasures to live for God. A Christ-centered life is a life that puts to death the old self and replaces it with a new self through the New Birth. The soul is precious, and not worth selling it for the world’s goods. The soul’s deliverance is only found in Christ.

The Way of Discipleship (Mark 8:34, Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23)

1. The nature of Jesus’ Messiahship informs our Discipleship
2. A false theological position: Have enough faith and you will get what you want from God, be happy, healthy, and wise – Idolatrous!
3. Following Jesus is serious & brings sober truths to bear on discipleship
 - a. Following Jesus is denying yourself
 - i. Does not mean denying things like food, or denying desires to reach enlightenment, or self-hatred
 - ii. To deny yourself means to be willing to choose against the life you want and have in order to live for God
 - iii. Be willing to leave behind the life you have known, the old life for a new life in Christ- rejecting and renouncing the old self
 - iv. Christ becomes the center of your life, not the self; your allegiance is now to the will of God and not your own will
 - v. Example of Self-Denial: Paul (**Phil 3:4b-8, 2 Cor 5:14-15**)
 - b. Following Jesus is dying to yourself – “take up your cross”
 - i. Mortify the old man, what you are by nature and be willing to be shamed, endure reproach, embarrassment, persecution, and even martyrdom for the sake of Christ and the Gospel
 - ii. The Cross is an instrument of death – a follower of Jesus does not live for the self, but aims to live sacrificially, serving God
 - iii. Put your old self to death and carry your coffin (**Gal 2:20**)
 - c. Following Jesus is hearing His voice and pursuing Him
 - i. Stop following your dreams, desires, self-interests, and start following the will of God, His Word, the commands of Christ
 - ii. Following Christ means a suffering path of righteousness
 - iii. Jesus renounced the world, unashamed of His Father, trusted Him solely as the one who raises the dead leading to life

The Weight of Discipleship (Mark 8:35-38, Mat 16:25-28, Luke 9:24-27)

1. Jesus explains why being His disciple is rational and profitable
2. Jesus’ rationale to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him
 - a. Reason #1: Denying yourself, losing this worldly life, is for your greatest joy – temporary hardships leading to everlasting life
 - i. Temporal pleasures leads to everlasting death
 - ii. A life outside of Christ, holding fast to the world versus radically identifying with Jesus no matter what
 - iii. Allegiance to Christ saves your life
 - iv. This worldly life will end, it will fail – imaginary independence and freedom is truly slavery and death
 - v. Illustration: The principle of sowing and reaping
 - vi. Sow your life into the eternal King and Kingdom = eternal life
 - b. Reason #2: What is your soul worth?
 - i. People sell their soul, not for the world, but pieces of it
 - ii. Immaturity is to place short-term satisfaction over long-term well-being (childish)
 - iii. The Wise are content with delayed gratification
 - iv. Contentment with little in this world, waiting for Christ’s return
 - v. Following Christ is worth it – your soul is saved
 - c. Reason #3: What do you possess from the world to exchange for your soul?
 - i. To possess the world, is not to possess Christ
 - ii. What do you love more than Jesus Christ? What are you exchanging for your soul? Is it worth it? (**Matthew 10:37-39**)
 - iii. The soul is bankrupt before God – nothing commends you to Him – what can you offer Him out of this world for your soul?
 - iv. Sinners rely on imaginary hope that the Bible is inaccurate about the end (my good will outweigh my bad, or all roads lead to God)
 - v. Example of Vain Hopes: King Solomon
 - vi. The soul is priceless, the world is emptiness, Christ is the everlasting treasure worth possessing for your salvation (**Mt 13**)
 - d. Reason #4: Those who abide in Christ, love His Word, and are not ashamed of Jesus and the Gospel will be saved
 - i. What it means to feel ashamed is embarrassed to be identified with Christ as Savior and Lord
 - ii. Jesus on the Cross despised the shame knowing that on the other side of the Cross was Joy (**Hebrews 12:2**)
 - iii. Our culture shames the Christian for believing in Jesus and following His ways
 - iv. The other side of this life is Christ, eternal life, eternal joy
 - v. Denying Christ means Jesus will be ashamed of you, He will deny you
 - vi. Jesus looked weak carrying the cross, but it was a voluntary weakness, on purpose, (No one takes His life from Him!)
 - vii. Our weakness is a voluntary, purposeful weakness – we willfully deny ourselves, taking up our cross, knowing the truth about what is coming – We are more than Conquerors in Christ!