

IF A CHRISTIAN, THEN A CROSS

Luke 14:27

Introduction: Thinking about the two men crucified beside Jesus how different their thoughts and actions must have been before and after going to their crosses. All the mockery, cursing, pretending bravery up to the moment the nails were driven in and then all of their pretense was gone with screams of pain and agony.

However as we think about Jesus, how different was He as He went to His cross. There was no screaming, cursing, pretense of bravery, no expressions of bitterness or hate, no resistance whatsoever, if anything Jesus seemed to be trying to help.

Outlined against the skyline stood the three crosses and through the centuries people have asked and wondered what was so significant about that center cross.

- No one who believes in Jesus Christ can get along without that center, middle cross.
- The cross is the main reason anybody believes in Jesus Christ in the first place.
- The cross is the foundation of the Christian faith.
- The cross is where a person is first introduced to Jesus Christ.
- The cross has an abundance of real, self-less love, sacrifice, forgiveness, righteousness around it.

I. FIRST OF ALL, THE CROSS BELONGS TO JESUS CHRIST

1. Before the creation of the world, before the tree the cross came from was ever a seed, it was destined to be Jesus' cross.
2. It was not the rope, the thorns or the nails that hurt Jesus the most. It was the UNBELIEF. Of the hundreds, even thousands who followed Him and called Him "Lord, Master, and Rabbi", only a hand full were at the cross. John, Nicodemus, Jesus' mother, and a few women were there.
3. From the cross Jesus cried to His Heavenly Father, "*...Why hast thou forsaken me?*" It seemed that only the wooden cross upon which Jesus hung was all He had in His dying moments.

II. JESUS GAVE ALL HIS FOLLOWERS THEIR OWN CROSSES (Luke 14:27)

1. Cross-bearing is the IMPERATIVE of the follower of Jesus.
 - It is fairly easy to pick out the real followers of Jesus...they have a "cross on their shoulders."
2. Certificates tell that a person has been baptized, is a church member, but ONLY the cross on one's shoulders tells whether that person is a genuine disciple, follower, Christian. If not cross, then that person is not a true Christian.
 - It is not a little gold or silver cross hanging around one's neck or pinned to one's clothing nor is it one hanging on a wall somewhere.
 - For Stephen it was dying at the hands of religious leaders, stoned to death.
 - For Paul it was being beheaded.

- For thousands of others through the centuries, it was hanging, cut into pieces, fed to wild animals, impaled upon stakes, burned alive, slaughtered, imprisoned and countless other horrible ways of torture, imprisonment and death.
3. It is very wrong to refer to something trivial as a cross. Toothaches, mother in laws, crippled child bad parents, something lacking are not crosses.
 - Look at the cross of Jesus, now ask yourself are you dealing with anything comparable to what Jesus went through? What about obedience to God? What about humility? What about sacrificing? What about love? What about thoughtfulness of others?
 - Crosses don't belong in front of Churches or upon their steeples. Crosses belong on the shoulders of Christians! The Cross is doing as Jesus did.

III. GOD'S KINGDOM HAS NO CITIZEN THAT DOES NOT CARRY A CROSS

1. The cross of Jesus will never be ours until in some way we become convinced that the cross on which Jesus died was/is the result of OUR own sin.
 - Jesus was not killed by sinners in Roman uniform or by Jewish Rabbis and officials. Peter's sin, Paul's sin, Adam's sin, and OUR sin is what killed Jesus on that cross.
2. The cross of Jesus belongs to US! It is the result of OUR sin. We cannot push the guilt and fault upon Pilate and the Jewish leaders. We are just as guilty as they were guilty. Face it!

CONCLUSION:

1. Do you have a cross like that which Jesus had?
2. The cross has many pretenders, but few defenders. Jesus said the cross would be interesting to many but VITAL to just a few. *"...many are called, but few are chosen..."* Jesus said.
3. The next time you see a movie about the life and death of Jesus Christ, observe how the people are acting when the movie is over. There probably won't be a prayer meeting or anybody singing "The Old Rugged Cross" but they will just leave without much if any change in their lives.
4. Do you REALLY love the one who died on His cross, Jesus Christ? If so, where is your cross?
5. Jesus said, *"...and whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple..."*