

THE CHRISTIAN'S CROSS

Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:27

Introduction: Are you a Christian? How do you like the Christian life so far? Have you encountered very many difficulties since you became a Christian? The Christian life is supposed to be a life of following Jesus. Indeed there are some who walk very close to Jesus as His disciples did. But there are also those who seem to follow Jesus at a distance, like some of the crowds.

"If any man will come after me; let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me..." said Jesus. Why do so few Christians really follow Jesus closely? Are you one of them? Sure about that?

I. WE MUST DENY OUR SELF IN ORDER TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST

1. There is a big difference between denying self and "self-denial."
 - Denying self is giving up certain things that could lead one away from Jesus' way of life.
 - Self-denial can lead to pride as we want others to see what we have given up.

2. Denying self is:
 - Not looking at one's own righteousness.
 - Refusing to depend upon one's own wisdom.
 - Ceasing to insist on having one's own way.
 - Being done with self running things
 - Putting self down.
 - Ceasing to consider one's own comfort.
 - Ceasing to consider one's own pleasure.

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God.." (Romans 12:1)

II. WE MUST TAKE UP OUR CROSS IN ORDER TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST

1. The cross is not simply an object of the Christian's faith, but **it is a WAY of life!**
 - The only way to the Father is through Jesus and the only way to fellowship with the Father is through following Jesus Christ.

2. What does the cross stand for?
 - It is not somebody's mean mother in law or a rebellious teenager or anything that bothers us, or some trial or trouble, or something unpleasant, or some physical ailment, or something that angers us.
 - **It is not something laid on us by life, but something that must be voluntarily picked up.**

3. The cross the Christian must pick up and live with is:
 - **A life of the world's dislike, even hatred at times depending upon how close one follows Jesus Christ.**
 - Remember the man who wanted to follow Jesus but wanted to wait and bury his dying father? Jesus said NO!
 - Remember the other man who wanted to follow Jesus but wanted to first go home and tell everybody good by. Jesus said NO! What was wrong with that?
 - What about the man who asked what good thing he could do to follow Jesus and Jesus told him to go sell everything he had, then come follow Him.

- The cross was voluntary for Jesus, so it is for the Christian. It can be either avoided or accepted, ignored or "taken up."
- **The Cross stands for a way of life that is voluntarily surrendered to the will of God.**
 - Jesus' obedience is the Christian's example.
 - Jesus voluntarily came, took up the cross and died, all in obedience to the will of God.
 - We Christians can do no less than be continually obedient, faithful, and surrendered to the will of God, all voluntarily without hesitation.
- **The Cross stands for a way of life to be lived out FOR others.**
 - *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it." (Matthew 16:25)*
 - *"As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." (John 20:18)*
 - Again, Jesus is the example for us Christians.
 - Why was Jesus sent?
 - Jesus sends Christians back into the world to do what He did while He was here.

CONCLUSION:

1. Are you a Christian? What kind of life are you living? Are you carrying the Cross Jesus gave you?
2. Every Christian is to pick up his/her cross and follow Jesus. Are you?
3. Remember, our cross is a way of life:
 - It is a life of giving up all that self wants and demands.
 - It is a life that most of the world will be against.
 - It is a life that is completely, totally surrendered to whatever God wants.
 - It is a life that is dedicated to living for others.
4. *"...If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me."
"Whosoever doeth not bear his cross cannot be My disciple."*
5. Want to be a follower of Jesus? Then take up the cross Jesus has for you and follow His example.