

YOUR ASSIGNED CROSS

Mark 8:34-38

Introduction: "Oh, what a cross I have to bear, you ought to meet my mother in law..." or "...my teenager is a heavy cross for me to bear..." or "my cross is this or that...." Most people think that any difficulty in life is their cross they have to bear because they are a Christian, however that is not what Jesus meant at all when He spoke of His followers having to bear a cross. Just what kind of "cross" is Jesus talking about and when and where do they come from? How long must the Christian "bear" his/her cross?

I. JESUS' INVITATION TO COME AND FOLLOW HIM IS EXACTLY THAT - AN INVITATION

1. Becoming a disciple, a follower, a believer, a Christian isn't forced upon any person.
 - Each follower, disciple, Christian came to a point in his/her life when a decision was made, without force, to believe in Jesus and commit one's life to Him.
 - Each follower, disciple, Christian could have said "no" and not become a follower, disciple or a Christian, but deliberately made the choice to become one.

II. EACH BELIEVER, CHRISTIAN HAS THE CHOICE TO DENY WHAT "SELF" WANTS

1. Who is usually "number one" in a person's life? Who gets all the attention? Who usually gets what he/she wants? Who decides what, where, when in one's own life?
 - If Jesus is to come first in a person's life, it is not by force but by deliberate choice of the believer, the Christian.
2. Many tend to "follow" Jesus until they must make a choice of giving up something to continue to "follow" Jesus.
 - They attend services, hear messages, sing, pray, observe the ordinances, are earnest in what they do, seem to have a zeal for the Lord.
 - However when they must deny themselves of something for the Lord's cause, they draw back.
 - Of what value is their "service?" If unwilling to sacrifice, to give up something, to deny themselves for the Lord, what kind of believer, Christian are they?
3. Most people are ambitious in everyday life, living lives of self-denial, getting up early, going to work, denying themselves proper rest, food and refuse many enjoyments of life, things that might interfere with what their goals in life are.
 - However, when it comes to doing the same things for the cause of Jesus, they refuse to deny themselves as they do for their lifetime goals.. Why aren't people willing to do for Jesus and His cause what they are willing to do for themselves?
4. Very few attain even a small part of their worldly goals. Very few have the wealth, property, things they dreamed of, sacrificed for and denied themselves for all their lives. What a waste we say.
5. The road of "self" does not go where people think it does.

III. THE BELIEVER, CHRISTIAN HAS A "CROSS" ASSIGNED TO TAKE UP

1. The believer, Christian does not decide what his/her "cross" will be. It is God who assigns to each believer tasks to perform for Him.
2. "Taking up one's cross" means doing what God wants and it always means to deny one's own ideas, opinions and wants, it often has difficulties and hardships that will try one's faith.
3. The cross was an instrument of death, a picture of total self denial, total surrender, total commitment.
 - God gives to each of His children things to do, they (we) do not select or choose what we want to do.
 - Serving God always requires self denial, death to something in one's own plans, desires.

IV. THE BELIEVER'S LIFE IS TO BE SPENT ON OTHERS, NOT ON HIM/HERSELF

1. Believers, Christians are to spend their lives, not hoard them, not go to some monastery or retreat to some remote, hidden place from the world.
 - Believers are to spend their lives giving, not getting. Not doing only the "safe" thing, but doing what is right, what God wants.
 - One can follow the world, or follow Jesus. One can indulge him/herself or can deny him/herself for the cause of the Lord. One can care for outward things or can care for inward things. One can seek a life of ease or can risk the very loss of it for the cause of the Lord. One can find death or one can find fleshly gain. One will some day stand before God ashamed or exalted. Once again, it is our choice.
2. Open immorality does not take one away from God any faster than a clean, respectable life of selfishness. Both work just as well as the other. Carbon Monoxide is invisible, odorless, tasteless, but is deadly to the human life. Selfishness is fatal. Self-surrender is life saving.
 - Spiritual suicide comes when a person clings desperately to life, ignoring the Lord Jesus in the attempt to save one's life.

V. CARRYING ONE'S ASSIGNED CROSS HAS ITS REWARD

1. As disloyalty has its punishment, loyalty to Jesus has its reward.
 - Being true to the Lord Jesus during one's lifetime will bring about the Lord's being true to that loyal, true, faithful one in eternity.
 - Follow the Lord in this world and one will be able to be with Him in the next.
2. Many follow the Lord Jesus while things are smooth and easy but they drop out when things become rugged and more difficult. They will not receive the same reward as the faithful ones will.
3. How a person treats the Lord Jesus in his/her lifetime, he/she will be treated the same when he/she stands before Him in judgment.

CONCLUSION:

1. What kind of "Christian" are you? A charter church member? Believer in the Bible? Brought up in a Christian home? Sing in the choir? Joined the church and was baptized when you were very young? Teach a Sunday School class? A deacon? A tither?
- NONE of these things make you a Christian.
2. Has there ever been a moment in your life when the Cross of Jesus pierced your heart and you believed with all that was within you that what Jesus did was for you and you gave yourself entirely to Him? THAT was when you became a Christian.
3. Becoming a Christian is not an automatic thing nor is it an easy thing to do. It means that you have surrendered your entire self to the Lord Jesus and have given up all your own desires for your life.
4. Have you actually surrendered your entire life to the Lord Jesus? If so, then you have been given a cross, a way of life, things to do for the Lord. God guides your life, God gives you this and that to do, providing whatever you need to do what He wants you to do.
5. Whose "cross" are you carrying? One of your own making? Or the one God has given?