



Deny Yourself, Take up your Cross Daily, and Follow Me

In Luke chapter 9, verses 23-27, we read:

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself (his soul)? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

Jesus said this before He was crucified. Before He had even been arrested. Not only did He know he was going to die soon, but He knew exactly how He was going to die....on a cross. Notice that He was saying this to "them all". This is something He was telling everyone. In the Mark 8:34 version of this it says that *'He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'*" (see also Matthew 16:24) He gathered all of his followers together to tell them this. He also mentions the cross before His crucifixion in Matthew 10 and Luke 14. Jesus knew how He was going to die, and was identifying himself with the cross. The cross became His brand, His logo. It became the main symbol of Christianity.

Why did Jesus select the cross as the symbol of the movement of God He came to start? An instrument of death. And not just any death, but a slow, torturous death. And what does He mean when He tells us to take up our cross daily and follow Him? What exactly is Jesus asking us to do when He says this?

One of the clues lies in the third sentence, where He asks what does it profit us to gain the whole world if it causes us to lose our soul. This implies that taking up our cross is the opposite of worldly gain. These two ways of living stand in opposition to each other. If we have gained the whole world, if we have it all, what is left for others? What have we done for others if we have lived a life that enabled us to gain the whole world? Rather than sharing, we have taken from others to gain for ourselves, in that type of lifestyle. We have trampled others, used others, profited over others, etc. If we have it all, that means that others have nothing. It is a life that has amassed riches, possessions, power, position, etc., at the expense of others. It is a life that is about "us". It is a lifestyle that always asks, "What's in it for me?" in every scenario, every deal, every moment. It is a me-centric life. A life where every moment is assessed based on how it affects me. This is the opposite of taking up our cross.

He goes on to tell us that if we are ashamed of Him, then He will be ashamed of us when He returns. Jesus is telling us that taking up our cross also means we are not ashamed to be identified with Him. He even says that we are to be identified with Him even if it results in our physical death. Martyrdom, something that is rare in America, but common in other parts of the world today.

He finishes with a strange ending, telling us that there are some standing there with Him right at that moment who will see the Kingdom of heaven before they physically die. We know that eight days after saying this He took a three of His disciples to the top of a mountain where they witnessed the transfiguration – the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 9:28-36). Perhaps Stephen was there among them as well, and we know that just before he was stoned to death for talking about Jesus, Stephen saw the Kingdom of God (Acts 6:8 through 7:60). Perhaps there were others there that day that we do not know about as well, who saw the Kingdom of God prior to their death.

To take up our cross daily means two things. It is to live daily in identification with God and His Son Jesus, and it is to live our lives for the benefit of others. Many have said that it is a death to self. There is even a Christian expression where we talk about crucifying our flesh, meaning to kill off our selfish nature. It is to live a life based on the two greatest commandments – love God and love others. It is to live a life of sharing our stuff and sharing the story of Jesus with others, regardless of the consequences.

Is your life identified with Jesus? Are you living for yourself, or are you living for God and for others? Do you talk about Jesus, or are you ashamed to share Him with others? Are you sharing your stuff with others, or are you hoarding for yourself? Do you think of others, or only of yourself, in your day to day living? Have you taken up your cross today? Do you take it up daily, or was it a one time thing? Maybe it is something you used to do, but don't really do anymore. It is time to get serious, to take up our cross daily, and follow Jesus. Ask God to show you how He wants you to do this, each day. And do not be ashamed of the cross of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) Deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Jesus.