



## Take Up Your Cross Daily

*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." (Luke 9:23-27)*

Imagine that you have been arrested by Roman soldiers, and they have taken you out of your cell, put a cross on your shoulder, and poked you with a sword and said "walk". You are surrounded by twenty armed Roman soldiers in battle array, and they are marching you through the streets, taking you to your crucifixion. What is on your mind? What are thinking at this point? What is on your mind at this point in your life?

A person who has taken up their cross is headed for one place – their crucifixion. There is no thought of what they are going to do tomorrow, no concern over career or health, no question if your football team is going to win their division, or really anything at all beyond just taking the next step. At that point, life has become very simplified, it is literally boiled down to one thing. Their impending death on the cross they are carrying. Carrying a cross has a way of stripping all of the worries and concerns of life away from us. Our life is about to end.

There is also the public spectacle of it. Being paraded through the streets, usually taking the long way, to their place of crucifixion. And then hanging there in public, for everyone to see, dying a slow death that might take days. The humiliation was so great that there was even a Roman saying that it was better to commit suicide than to be crucified. What is Jesus saying when He tells us to "take up our cross"? What is He asking us to do?

My brother and I used to go backpacking in the summers in Colorado. We would spend months preparing, planning, buying new gear. Our every spare moment was spent preparing for the trip, thinking about the trip, training for the trip, gearing up for the trip, picking the route we would take. And the closer we got to the day of departure, the more intense our activity would become. Sure we still had to go to work every day, eat, sleep, etc., but with our spare time we were singularly focused on the upcoming trip. Jesus is asking us to have this level of focus about our relationship with Him. There are many ramifications of this. Following are just a few.

First, taking up our cross means that our life is to be singularly focused on our final destination, heaven. Colossians 3 tells us to "set our mind on the things above, not on the things on earth". Just as the person carrying their cross through the streets was focused on the fact that they are about to be crucified, we are to be focused on the fact that we are now going to heaven. He is telling us to avoid being distracted by the things of this world – wealth, power, comfort, toys, games, entertainment, pleasure, etc. This includes not trying to create heaven on earth while we are here. He is asking us to be singularly minded, to "live for the day" that we will see Him in His Kingdom. Taking up our cross is first to have a mind set on the Kingdom of God. It is the primary focus of our life.

Second, taking up our cross means that we are finished striving. A man carrying a cross is a beaten man. If he is being crucified for being a rebel, the fighting is over. There is no more he can do. It is finished. Similarly, when we are born again and take up our cross, the work of our salvation is "finished". Jesus finished it on the cross, and now we rest in the work He has completed. We cease striving now that God is our God (Psalm 46:10). We no longer have to work our way to heaven, we no longer have to earn salvation. Jesus did it all for us. As He said on the cross, "It is finished", and we can cease from dead works and rest in the finished work of Christ. Taking up our cross is resting in the salvation of Jesus Christ, daily.

Third, crucifixion was primarily used for rebels and slaves, and before we were born again we were both. We were slaves to sin, and we were rebelling against God. Now that we are born again, we have been set free from our slavery to sin, and our rebellion against God is over. Our old life is over, and we are now a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have been "crucified with Christ", we no longer live, but "Christ lives in [us], and the life we now live in the flesh, we live by faith in the son of God, who loved [us] and gave himself up for [us]." (Galatians 2:20) We are new creations, set free from slavery to sin, no longer rebelling against God.

Fourth, it is a daily thing. We do not take up our cross once, and we are good to go for the rest of our days. It is something we have to do daily, every single day. We must start every day by picking up our cross, and setting our face towards the place of our crucifixion. All day long we must make decisions based on the fact that have been crucified with Christ, and Christ lives in us, putting God and others before ourself.

Have you taken up your cross? Do you have a singularity of focus about your life, focused on Christ and the Kingdom of heaven, or are you distracted by the world and its things (1 John 2:15-17). Where is your mind? What is your mind set on daily. What do you spend your time thinking about each day? Do you let others go first, or are you a greedy driver? Do you agonize over which line to stand in at the grocery store, or do you let others go before you? Are you still living like you are a slave to sin, hanging on to pet sins and sinful attitudes, or have you let go of the sins of your past? Are you still rebelling against God in some area of your life? Face it, your life is over, you have been crucified with Christ, you no longer live, but Christ lives in you. You are a new creation now. Live like it, daily.