

Each Must Take Up His Cross

Matt. 16:21-26

Introduction:

1. In our recent studies about the meaning of the cross this passage was repeatedly quoted.
2. This passage connects the cross of Jesus and the cross that each of us must bear if we are to follow Him.
3. Jesus' cross involved the giving up of His life. This text calls on us to give up our life when it says, "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."
4. Are you willing to die for the Lord? Are you willing to give your life to living for Him? It is easy to say, "I would die for Him," when there is no immediate threat. Maybe the Lord is looking for a living sacrifice rather than a dead one (cf. Rom. 12:1). Maybe He is looking for a life given to Him.
5. What does it mean to take up one's cross and follow Him? How do I do that?

Discussion:

- I. Taking up one's cross involves a radical commitment to the purpose of God (Matt. 16:21-23).
 - A. Jesus, in submission to the purpose of God is going up to Jerusalem to suffer and be killed.
 1. Peter says, "God forbid it, Lord!"
 - a. God was not forbidding it. In fact, it was His plan.
 - b. Jesus' statement to Peter comes as a stiff rebuke. "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me."
 - c. Peter's thinking is in the opposite direction of God's. Even though Peter loves the Lord and does not want Him to suffer and be killed, his plan for the Lord is in Satan's direction rather than in God's.
 2. Jesus is perfectly aligned with God's will.
 - a. Alignment with God's will involves suffering and death.
 - b. There are no comfortable crosses! There are no padded crosses!
 - c. Peter's sentimentality must give way to the radical acceptance of suffering and death as God's plan.
 - d. At the last supper Peter is hesitant to allow the Lord to wash his feet. He doesn't want Jesus to humiliate Himself, but Jesus' insists, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (Jn. 13:8).
 - e. Peter denies the Lord three times as Jesus goes to the cross. Jesus is perfectly aligned with the purpose of God and recognizes it involves a radical commitment.
 3. Later Peter will understand. In his Pentecost sermon he said, "This man (Jesus), was delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts

2:23). And later when he was threatened by the Jewish Council he said, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than God, you be the judge” (Acts 4:19).

- B. Each of us must make this same commitment to the purpose of God if we are going to follow Jesus.
 - 1. Peter is the one who makes this clear in 1 Pet. 4:1-2.
 - 2. He says that Christ left us an example to follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).
 - 3. He says that we should not be surprised by suffering (1 Pet. 4:12-14).

II. Taking up one's cross involves denying self (16:24-26).

- A. Denying self is not the easiest thing.
 - 1. It is hard for us to deny ourselves food, but Jesus did (Matt. 4:4). “Turn these stones into bread.”
 - 2. It is hard for us to deny proving ourselves, but Jesus did (Matt. 4:5-6). “If you are the Son of God. . .”
 - 3. It is hard for us to put the Lord first before the things of the world, but Jesus did (Matt. 4:8-10). “All these kingdoms I will give you if you fall down and worship me.”
- B. God calls on us to deny ourselves and follow His instruction (Eph. 4:17-32; 5:1-5).
 - 1. We cannot continue in our worldly way of thinking in merely satisfying our desires (4:17-19).
 - 2. To follow Christ we must learn Him and act in laying aside the old self and be renewed in the spirit of our mind (4:20-24).
 - 3. It will be evident in our behavior (4:25-32).
 - 4. Christ gave Himself up for us and we need to give ourselves up for Him (5:1-5).
- C. For some of us some things may be harder to give up than for others.
 - 1. I will have to give up the pain I have suffered in order to forgive another.
 - 2. I will have to give up my addictions, my pride, my hatred, my envy, my jealousy, my slanderous words.
 - 3. I must embrace humiliation, reviling, suffering, while not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead (1 Pet. 2:22, 3:9).
- D. It is for our benefit (Matt. 16:25-26).
 - 1. It means life for us.
 - 2. It means salvation for our soul.
 - 3. It looks backward. It looks upside down. It looks wrong, to give up our life in order to find it.

III. It involves submission to Jesus as King (Matt. 16:13ff).

- A. The ultimate authority is heaven, but as Son of God, Jesus serves as the authority on the throne of His Father.

1. God is the King.
 2. All authority has been given to the Son, so the Son serves on the throne.
- B. Just as Jesus has submitted completely to the purpose of God so we must submit completely to the purpose of God (Phil. 2:1-8).
- C. So that it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20).

Conclusion:

1. Taking up your cross involves severe commitment.
2. It involves giving up life in order to have life.
3. It involves giving your life into the control of the Lord.