

Taking up the Cross

Matthew 10:38

³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Worthy – as we've said, it means worthless, of no value. The sense here is that it is possible for us to be of little value or worth to God.

- This is particularly interesting because it follows Christ assuring his disciples they are worth more than many sparrows – and yet, there is a way to be totally useless, worthless.

Two instructions:

1. Take up your cross.

- This is something Jesus referred to a lot.

Matthew 16:24

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Mark 8:34

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Luke 14:27

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

- Let's not over complicate this. It's not "a burden to carry", it's not living with some difficult reality... the cross meant one thing in the first century, death in the most painful and humiliating way possible.

2. Follow Christ.

- This one is straight forward as well... follow him. Make your life about him.
- If you're not a Christian, today is your opportunity to make your life about more than just yourself... follow Christ, make your life about him. It's a way better option.

Matthew 9:9

⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

The BIG IDEA:

The life of a Christian is a cross-focused life.

- Jesus' death on the cross was the most significant event in the history of the universe, and certainly it is the most important historical event to us as individual Christians.
- Talk to a Leafs fan about the history of hockey and the year 1967 will come up pretty quickly... it's the last time the Leafs won (and likely will ever win) the Stanley Cup
- It's tragic that so many Christians know more about worldly history, or war history, or sports history than they do about what the historical event of the cross means for their lives.

1 Corinthians 2:2

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

- Paul was so excited, humbled, amazed by the cross he wanted to know nothing except it! Every bit of knowledge, interest, study and life was filtered through the cross.
- As Christians contemplating, meditating on, learning about and remembering the cross is so vital to a life full of joy and peace.
- ***Understanding the cross is the key to understanding your assurance of salvation, it is the key to understanding the transforming power of the spirit of God for sanctification, it is the key to understanding spiritual warfare, the power of prayer... it is ABSOLUTELY crucial!***

What To Know:

1. To Jesus, taking up his cross meant suffering pain, shame and death.

Hebrew 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

2. To us, taking up the cross means being obedient to the point of pain, shame and death.

Philippians 2:8

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

What To Do:

1. Concentrate on what is real instead of what you feel.

“Avoid the mistake of concentrating overmuch on your feelings. Above all, avoid the terrible error of making them central. Anyone making this mistake... is doomed to be unhappy because of the failure to follow the order that God Himself ordained...”

“Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?”

- Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*

2. Never “move on” from the cross.

2 Timothy 1:8-14 ; 2:8-10

“...do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher,¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.