

**Red Letter Edition: Did Jesus Really Say That?**  
***“An Essential Sacrifice”***

**Introduction:** Final message of this 3-part series

**Week One: Examined Priorities**

*"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:26 NKJV*

**Week Two: An Exclusive Way**

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6 NKJV*

Today: **An Essential Sacrifice**

**Framing the Scene (16:13-28)**

- ✓ Was in the region of Caesarea Philippi (most northern point of His ministry)-from there will travel south toward Jerusalem
- ✓ Until now there has been gradual revelation of Jesus as Messiah-climaxed by Peter's great confession
- ✓ Jesus then begins to reveal that he "must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things..."
- ✓ Peter rebukes him... "Far be it from You Lord."
- ✓ Peter is then rebuked (Did not understated true discipleship) for he minded the things of men NOT God
- ✓ Jesus (in one of His hardest sayings) sets forth the qualities and necessity of authoritative discipleship

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 16:24-25 NKJV*

**HARD SAYING!**

## Taking up one's cross

*R.T. France—"Christian readers have become so used to the cross as a word and a symbol that it is hard now to recapture the shudder that the word must have brought to a hearer in Galilee at the time."*

- ✓ Crucifixion was the favored mode of punishment by the Romans but regarded with horror by the Jews
- ✓ It was the form of execution for slaves and political rebels
- ✓ It was both the cruelest form of punishment and carried the stigma of social disgrace when applied to a free person; the ultimate shame
- ✓ It was inescapably public and began not when the condemned was nailed to the cross, but with the equally public procession through the streets in which the victim had to carry the heavy cross-piece of his own, among the jeers and insults of the crowd

IMPORTANT: This is the prospect Jesus holds out before any "worthy" disciples, a savage death, and a public disgrace

- ✓ He will go through it
- ✓ Following Jesus (behind him) on the march to execution
- ✓ But when an opportunity to follow behind Jesus comes from one of his disciples-to carry the cross for him-they will not be there to take it up-left to a stranger

*Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. Matthew 27:32 NKJV*

TRUTH: Popular usage has sanitized the language of having "a cross to bear" so that its challenge has all but evaporated. Today we seek revelation to what this truly means for those of us who desire to follow Him.

Five Powerful Statements

### **I. To take up one's cross and truly follow Jesus requires DECISIVE ACTION!**

(ILL) to pick up that cross and face that mob requires a decision

- A. Not a feeling, fleeting emotion, a response to fear or a moment of guilt-it is a decision to follow Jesus wherever He leads

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — 29 lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Luke 14:28-31 NKJV*

It is a decision!

B. Decisive action implies

1. Thought has been given to the outcomes and consequences
2. Other options have been forsaken
3. A change in direction had been made

NOTE: Churches are full of multitudes, crowds, spectators, but sadly few who have decisively acted to follow Jesus

## **II. This decisive action will inaugurate and make possible an UNWAVERING JOURNEY**

NOTE: Remember this narrative?

*And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." 62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:61-62 NKJV*

(ILL) Don't make commitment to carry cross without a commitment to keep going

- A. When no decisive action that has been thought out occurs-it is easy to abandon
- B. But when I decisively acted-I won't waver!
- C. Forward progress is crucial to the discipleship journey
  1. Those truly disciples have decided
  2. Not fair weather Christians-they have set their sights on the cross

(ILL) Pastored many waning believers

- ✓ Some strengthen when trials come-fade when all is well
- ✓ Others fall out when trial comes
- ✓ Pattern is repeated in families/generations

### 3. Truths

#### ✓ Focus

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV*

#### ✓ Discipline

*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV*

### III. The commitment to an unwavering journey will most certainly include WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS

(ILL) Carrying cross through the crowded streets/mob of jeering crowds is both difficult and distracting

At least 5 forms of distraction

- A. The temptation to shortcut the process of discipleship (leave the path, take shortcuts, bypass the disciplines)

NOTE: A true discipleship journey is grueling, must have stamina that comes from discipline

- B. The lure of worldly pleasure

(ILL)

*For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica — Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 2 Timothy 4:10 NKJV*

### C. The heat of painful trial

*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." Revelation 2:10-11 NKJV*

### D. The fascination with deceptive religious philosophies

*But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it! 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 NKJV*

### E. The snag of temporal compromise

ALL MEET THOSE COMMITTED TO THE JOURNEY!

## **IV. Following Christ and taking up one's cross leads to a PREDICTABLE OUTCOME**

*The cross effects its ends by destroying one established pattern, the victim's, and creating another pattern, its own. Thus it always has its way. It wins by defeating its opponent and imposing its will upon him. It always dominates. It never compromises, never dickers nor confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It cares not for peace; it cares only to end its opposition as fast as possible.*

*With perfect knowledge of all this Christ said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). So the cross not only brings Christ's life to an end, it ends also the first life, the old life, of every one of His true followers. It destroys the old pattern, the Adam pattern, in the believer's life, and brings it to an end. Then the God who raised Christ from the dead raises the believer and a new life begins. A.W. Tozer-The Radical Cross*

## **V. Taking up one's cross and dying to self prompts a DIVINE REVERSAL**

***For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 16:25 NKJV***

***Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Matthew 16:28 NKJV***

NOTE: Just like the Son of Man who would die but return in greater glory so those who yield their life to the cross will experience the divine reversal of the glorified life!

**Conclusion:**

- A. Today-a cheap, low-grade, Christianity says, “I am thankful for God’s plan in sending Christ to the cross to save me from Hell.”
  - 1. God’s greatest aim was not to save us from Hell
  - 2. Rather to reproduce in us the likeness of Jesus Christ in our sinful lives

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20 NKJV*

- B. Divine chastening is not the same as taking up our cross

NOTE: Both are painful

- 1. The rod of chastisement is an act of God imposed without the consent of the one who suffers it
- 2. The cross cannot be imposed by another
- 3. The rod stands in the way of disobedience but the cross in the way of obedience
- 4. We feel the pain of the cross only when we suffer for Christ’s sake by our own willing choice
- 5. It is the cross we assume voluntarily

“If any man will...let him...”

WE CAN REFUSE TO TAKE IT OR WE CAN STOOP AND TAKE IT UP AND START FOR THE DARK HILL!

*Tozar: “The difference between great sainthood and spiritual mediocrity depends upon which choice we make.”*