

Our Adversary the Devil - His Ministers Cont'd

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Date: 30 July 2023

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 14. We're going to take you right back to where we were Sunday morning and carry a thought forward on something that we came across in Luke 14.

The subject, the message was bearing your cross. And as you recall, in this passage, Christ called his disciples to forsake all and to take up their cross and to follow him.

And it was the words, come after me. In verse 33, it was forsake all that he hath. So we'll begin. We'll just read again the first three verses that we were in in 25, 6 and 7.

Kind of get our bearings back to where we were and then go forward. Luke 14, 25. And there went great multitudes with him and he turned and said unto them, If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. Skip down to 33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

[1 : 22] So we studied this Sunday. Christ called these men and he called them to forsake. And if you remember reading through the Gospels, you've read accounts of Peter, James, John, Andrew, others, Matthew.

They forsook their father's nets. They forsook their jobs, their families. They forsook their, Matthew forsook a government position and followed Jesus Christ.

And so they did that. Some of those men did that. But not everybody was doing that. There was a great multitude coming with them. And so he had to turn to them all and say, Hey, this is going to cost you something. And we studied that as well. And that comes out in verse 28 where you have to sit down and count the cost.

Now, Christ, I love to point it out that he said it three times, that if you don't do this, this, this, you cannot be my disciple. It's not going to work. You're not going to follow through with it.

You can't do this unless you first do some other things. And on Sunday morning we said that you're going to have to first lay everything else down in order to pick up that cross.

[2 : 27] You're going to have to let go of some ambitions, some plans, some things you've worked for, some relationships you've developed. Whatever it is that you've built up in your life to that point where God says, No, no, no.

I want you to follow me. Take up that cross first. You're going to have to lay everything down. He pointed out that you're going to have to count the cost because there's a calculation involved in being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

It will cost you something. And it's probably going to cost you dearly. And that's what everybody's afraid of. But it's worth it. But it will cost you something. And the advice is you better count on it costing you something.

And so know that going into it. And so a choice was to be made to submit to a life of following Jesus Christ. And the choice is not meant to be an emotional decision where, Oh, he healed me.

Now I'm going to follow him. Or if you do this for me, if you heal my daughter, I'll follow you. I promise. That's an emotional response to a miracle, to a great thing.

[3 : 27] And this is not an emotional response. This is a calculated decision. Sit down and count the cost. Are you willing to lay down your life for my sake?

Because if you're not willing, you can't be my disciple. That was one of the statements he said in verse 26. And his own life also. And so I want you to understand the difference between an emotional response and feeling obligated to do something for Christ.

I'm sure I told you at one point of a man, maybe you don't really want to call this, but I know a man that had kind of made a pledge to God that his brother had leukemia, his younger brother.

And as a teenager, this young man at the time made a pledge to God, If you will heal my brother, who was about, I think, in sixth grade at the time, if you'll heal my brother, I'll be a preacher.

That was like the deal he made with God. He was real about it. I didn't know about it. Nobody knew about it until he gave a testimony some years later in church saying, I made a deal with God years ago and I didn't follow through with it.

[4 : 30] And he felt so convicted and he just kind of got to a place in his life where he said, I'm going to follow through with it. And so he went to Bible school. And he graduated Bible school four years later and he went to take a church and he lasted in that church for five years.

And then, I don't know the situation completely, but I know he was done. And I know he got out of it and never got back in it. And I don't know, I'm not his judge. I never will be his judge.

I don't know what the Lord's doing. I have no idea. I don't even pretend to. But I do know that his own testimony was that what he made this deal with God, this calling he kind of brought into his life was an emotional thing to the life of his brother, a plea for his health.

And I don't know, I don't know. I think God will use anybody that surrenders to him. I think God will take anybody that he can and do something with them if they're willing.

But nevertheless, this is a different thing. I believe this is something different. This is Christ calling disciples and letting them know that you can't be my disciple unless you're willing to lay down your life.

[5 : 35] Now, there's other passages where similar words are spoken. Come back to Luke chapter 9. And I want to point something else out here. Other passages where he says very similar things to describe this choice to follow Jesus Christ.

And so let's look at this one here in Luke 9 and then kind of carry on the thought and explain something about following Jesus Christ. And then probably maybe next week take it to a reasonable conclusion that I think will help everybody.

But for now, Luke chapter 9, look at verses 23 and 24. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Now, losing your life is a death.

If there's a car accident, we might say, Oh, two people lost their lives. What a terrible thing. There's a fire. Fifteen people died. They lost their lives. A man can lose his life.

[6 : 52] And it may not be a literal loss of physical life, but rather a forsaking all that he hath and forsaking the life that he had built up in his heart and mind to embrace the cross daily and follow Jesus Christ.

Again, he says in verse 23, If any man will come after me, there it is again, following him, deny yourself first, take up your cross daily and follow me. So there's a death.

And it's the opposite of the losing your life, saving your life. If verse 24, Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But the end of the verse, Whosoever loses his life, the same shall save it.

Now, you're not saving your soul. Let's doctrinally not get that mixed up, that if you obey Christ, then you'll be able to be saved in the end. That's not the teaching. And that doesn't apply to us, even if you would be teaching that to somebody in this Bible.

The application doesn't follow through to the church age. But you don't save your soul, but denying yourself and forsaking all. And if you decide, I'll say it this way, if you decide to maintain your will and maintain the desires of self, you're not laying down your life and you're not denying yourself.

[8 : 07] Christ calls you to deny that stuff and take up a cross. And so you can see how the thoughts are merging with what we already covered on Sunday. But let's continue this a little bit further.

For some people, serving Jesus Christ is a fun thing, an exciting thing, and a good thing, until it starts to hurt. Until there's something that just gets in that isn't pleasant.

And then it's like, well, hold up. Now God, I thought you were a good God. Why is this happening to me? I've forsaken all. What's in it for me?

And that's somebody who has not denied himself and taken up his cross daily. That's somebody who's just kind of looking for God to bless his life.

He's looking for good things. He's looking for God to smile upon him. The Apostle Paul said, I'm crucified with Christ. That's the end of it. He said, I die daily.

[9 : 07] And Christ said, here, take up your cross daily. So there's something to saving your life. And the only way to do that is to lose your life. How is that possible? Well, this is one thing we call a Christian irony or a biblical irony.

And irony is when the words that are expressed actually have the opposite effect than what they seem to say. And in the case here, lose your life, well, die.

It's over, right? Well, no, actually, Christ is saying, if you'll do that, it's just going to begin. It's the start of something new. It's a resurrection. It's in Romans chapter 6.

It's walking in newness of life. Newness of life. A new life is raised up when your old life dies. And so if you'll lose it, you'll find it.

Now, does that make sense? At least I thought what Christ is saying, if you lose your life for my sake, the same shall save it. And he's talking about being a disciple. Now, I love to couple this thought with another passage.

[10 : 06] So please turn to Colossians chapter 3. And in this passage, something comes to light when we put these two thoughts together that I think is incredible and eye-opening to understanding what Christ is calling you to, what he's asking of you, and how it transpires, how it goes in front of you.

Colossians 3. And we'll read the first three verses. If ye then be risen with Christ, do you see what we're talking about now?

Do you see the new life? The old man's dead. You lost your life. You're going to save it. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on the things on the earth. Why? For ye are dead. Now notice this last phrase. And your life is hid with Christ in God.

Your life, your new life, the life that God has for you, the life that Jesus Christ says, come after me, forsake your all, deny yourself, take up your cross, come after me.

[11 : 30] There's a life that's to be found following Jesus Christ. But that life cannot be realized, it can't be experienced, it can't be understood, it can never be seen until you first forsake all, until you first lay down your life, until you take up your cross.

The life that God has for you is hidden in Christ or with Christ in God, it says in verse 3. It's hidden.

You'll never know it. You can't find it. It's hidden from view. Whatever God has for you, whatever His, if you want to call it His perfect will or His will or desire for your life, whatever that would be, whatever that looks like, wherever that may lead, you can't see it.

You're totally blinded from seeing it, finding it, understanding it, perceiving it. It's hidden somewhere. God purposely hid it with Christ in Himself waiting for you to climb up on that altar and offer your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

What that life entails of following Jesus Christ, whether it's good things and great days and blessings and wonderful things and souls saved and miracles wrought, so to speak, or whether it's suffering and peril and loss and pain and jail and torture, whatever it is, God just, you can't see it.

[13 : 10] it's hidden from you. You can't understand it. God won't reveal it to you. He won't let you choose, I want to do this.

God, I'll pick up that cross. Just first tell me what it's going to look like down the road. Nope. You can't. He won't do that. He never has. He never will. That life is hid.

So he says, take up your cross, follow me. So I want us to get this thought here. God doesn't offer you options.

You don't get to pick A, B, or C, Christian life, or God's will, A, B, or C, and I'll pick which one I want. What God has for you, he doesn't reveal to you.

And he barely gives you anything, but what he does give you is one step at a time. One step at a time. And it's that thought that I'd like to deal with tonight, bearing your cross, one step at a time.

[14 : 12] So if I made it clear where we're at and what's going on, you got the idea of bearing your cross, you got the idea of forsaking all, now understand that God has a, there's a path that you'll go.

If you come and pick that cross up, he's going to lead you on a path, but he'll never show you where that path leads to. He'll never show you the ups and downs, the good and the bad. He just says, follow me.

So let's think about this for a little bit. Number one, your life is hid, it says. It's hid. So God does not reveal what he has for you until you surrender, until you lay your life down, until you're all in.

He's not going to reveal any of the specifics, nor should he. You know why? Because he needs disciples that'll follow him, that'll forsake all, not that'll hold on to something in case, no, drop it all, you don't know where you're going, so the best thing you can do is just follow me, take up the cross.

That's all I'm giving you. He needs soldiers that can obey orders, not ones that have their own agendas and plans. So he's not going to tell you what it is. He's not going to reveal that to you in the beginning.

[15 : 24] Too many Christians want to know how it's going to work out before I commit to it. When I first felt the Lord dealing with my heart about, I didn't even know what it was, I call it now a call to preach, but at the time I would have just said the Lord's dealing with me about serving him with my life.

I thought it was a missionary to Russia because that's what was happening in the service and that I thought, oh, God is calling me to Russia to be a missionary because they are lost and on their way to hell.

And just this past week at teen camp, one of the preachers said a very similar story. When God called me to preach, I thought he was telling me he wanted me to be a missionary to Haiti or Ukraine or something, I don't recall what it was, but when he said it, I thought, I know exactly what you mean.

The Lord was dealing with your heart about surrendering to him and in the just naivety of it all, you just thought, this is what it is, what that guy is telling me.

But that wasn't it. Why was God doing it? Well, because God was moving and God was calling but he was not revealing his will. He was just putting his finger on a young man and saying, son, knock, knock, knock.

[16 : 36] I want you to follow me. Now, there's a fear in not knowing. There's a real carnal fear in not knowing but it is, let me ask you this, is God's will to be feared?

Well, in this church house we say, no, we got the word of God, we're singing about Christ, the blood of Christ. God's will is not to be feared but when you're by yourself out there, is God's will to be feared?

Truth is, no. No more out there than it is in here but when you're all alone and it's just you and your flesh and you're on your own, it's a little scary.

But is God's will to be feared? The answer is no. God's will for your life is not to be feared. Fearing the will of God is suggesting that he's wrong. It's suggesting he can't take care of me.

It's suggesting he doesn't know really what's best for me. I better trust myself. I better make my own decisions. And what I say to that is if you've been wrong even once in your life, you better trust God because he's never been wrong once.

[17 : 47] So if he's got a desire for you and a way he wants to lead you, the best thing you can do is follow. He's not going to show you the whole thing out ahead of time. And there's a fear in that.

Look at Acts chapter 9. This is where Saul is on his way to persecute Christians and the Lord Jesus Christ reveals himself to him and he immediately responds trembling in verse number 6.

He trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will thou have me to do? In the very moment he surrendered to following what the Lord has for him.

I'm ready. What do you want me to do? That's it. Now God's not going to show you. He wants to first see surrender. And you know what Paul didn't know about in that moment?

He didn't know about that chapter he was going to write a little later in the Corinthians. What is it? Is it 2nd or 1st Corinthians? 11? About all the perils. I think it's 2nd Corinthians 11.

[18 : 59] He didn't know that he was going to be beaten with rods three different times. Five times received 40 stripes, save one. once was I stoned.

He didn't know that was coming, did he? He didn't know he was going to be shipwrecked and out in the seas for a night and a day just out in the waters. And in that case, can you imagine?

You don't know. You have no guarantee or rescue. There's no coast guard looking for you. He's out there, darkness of the blackest sea at night. And he goes on and on to talk about people trying to kill him, taking an oath to kill him, being hungry, cold, fasting, nakedness.

Lord, what will they have me to do? Well, Paul, I can't tell you right now what I'm going to have you do because you would turn and run.

You couldn't handle it. God doesn't reveal what he has for you, but he wants you to surrender. What God does do is he gives you the scripture. And you read in the scripture, he hath done all things well.

[20 : 09] And it speaks to you and say, well, I'm talking about God here. I'm trusting God here. He never makes mistakes. And you say, okay, he hath done all things well.

And you read in the scripture, great is thy faithfulness. And you're like, yep, that's him. He's always faithful. So, I can surrender to him. I can follow him.

I don't know where it's going to go, but he's faithful. And you read in the scriptures, is anything too hard for the Lord? Nothing's too hard for the Lord. I can follow him. I'll never leave thee nor forsake thee.

Okay. Okay, I think I could follow that. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding in all thy ways. Acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths.

Okay, Lord, you promised you'll direct my paths. You promised you'll lead me and that you'll never leave me. You promised that you're faithful. You promised that you care.

[21 : 13] Okay, I can surrender to that. Whatever it is, Lord, I believe you. I can trust you. I can surrender to that. And so, the first thing you get it is God doesn't reveal what he has for you before you surrender.

You don't get to make the choice. Okay, I don't want that. Or I don't think I can handle that. No, you just, you surrender and then God leads you. And the second thought in going forward in this is that your life is hid.

What God has for you is hidden and he does not reveal the end or he doesn't even reveal the journey. He only reveals one step. Actually, he reveals the first step.

So, look at Acts chapter 9 and verse 6. He trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said, Arise, go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

So, you know what God gave him? One step. One step. Now, look at verse 15. This is when God is speaking with Ananias.

[22 : 24] And verse 15, but the Lord said unto him, go thy way. And he's speaking about Saul or name change to Paul. He says, for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel for I'll show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

He told Ananias that. But he didn't tell Saul that. Saul was blind to what he was going to do for God. He just said, what do you want me to do? And he said, go to the city.

Go there and then you'll get your further instructions. The point is, God doesn't reveal the journey. He just reveals one step at a time. This is God's way.

This is God's way of leading a disciple. Just one step at a time. This is his way of training us, of teaching us to trust him. And by the way, it works.

This thing works. He knows what he's doing. He's teaching you to trust him one step at a time. Much the way you might teach your children to walk. You teach them to trust you.

[23 : 28] And God proves himself in little ways. And he proves himself in little ways in your life and he's conditioning you to understand I can trust him. Not just in little ways.

If he can handle these little things, he can handle these big things. And then the scripture is bursting with evidence of his providence and of his care and protection. Think about Moses when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

What insight did they have about the journey ahead? He said, get all that stuff, borrow from them all these jewels and gold and go. And they left.

They went out. But what knowledge did they have about the wilderness ahead? Matter of fact, he led them into a place where it was pinched and they thought they were going to be slaughtered by Pharaoh's army. Mountains and water and an army pursuing.

What did God do? Moses said, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. And boof, he parts the sea and on they go. And before they know it, Pharaoh's army is drowned out in the sea.

[24 : 29] They've been delivered from this force and foe that has been plaguing them for 400 years. Now they're freed from this. Rejoice. Praise the Lord. This water is bitter.

Now they're drinking water. Just like that, they're turning on Moses and on God and God didn't, you know, okay, he fixed the waters. What did he do then?

Did he tell them about all the neighboring, what do we call them, nations that were going to be hostile toward them as they passed by their lands and through their lands and threatened them and came out against them?

He didn't tell them about those things. He led them one step of the way. They had no knowledge. Of what this trip would completely entail, when it would last or how long it would last or when they'd get there or where the trip would take them.

Just one step at a time. I've been watching some documentaries here and there about mountaineers going into the highest peaks in the world and they're all like pushing 30,000 like Mount Everest or I think it's K2 is the second one and there's just incredible stories of men that are putting on their oxygen tanks and putting on all their gear and hiking their way up these mountains and they all get in shape.

[25 : 52] They all work out and get themselves conditioned and prepared to take this climb but they don't all just go right up to the top and wave and come back down. It's not possible. So they go up in stages.

They go to base camp one and they get up so many thousand feet and have to just hang out and give their body a break and rest and get acclimated to the elevation because they're not meant to live at this elevation.

They're not used to it. Their lungs have not enough oxygen so they have to sit there and rest and take some time. If they don't do that if they push on they're going to get altitude sickness and it could make them extremely sick and even kill them.

And every year people die in all these mountains because they're not doing it according to the right procedures or they're just physically not prepared for it. And so up they go and they go to stage camp one and then up they go to stage camp two and then little by little fewer and fewer make it up to the next one and take their time and get reconditioned and get refueled and get energy up because it's harder and harder the higher you get and it's impressive stuff what these guys do.

But the climbing is so hard on the body and there's more exertion to get up these steeper peaks and climbs and less oxygen to fuel their blood system and their energy it just gets harder and harder.

[27 : 15] And it reminds me of the Christian life. The Lord doesn't show you the entire journey. He doesn't even show you sometimes the rugged hardships and the strenuous climbs that it's going to be.

He doesn't reveal that to you. He doesn't even show you how you're going to get hurt or what you may have to give up along the way to make it easier to climb. If he did you'd never follow.

You'd say I can't do that. Leave that to the stronger ones because that's not for me. And Jesus Christ just says take up your cross and follow me.

One step at a time. Just one step. You can take one step. You can take another step. And there'll be stages to your Christian life to where the Lord will take you to a place and cause you to rest and cause you to stay and to sit and you don't even know it but you're getting stronger and actually you're up higher than you've ever been before.

And you could look around and see the views and you could say I remember when I was down there and then the Lord says in time take up your cross and follow me. And he takes you up higher to higher ground.

[28 : 24] We sing Lord lift me up. I want to go up to higher ground. I want to sail above the world. I want to get up there. It's almost like the Christian life is walking through a heavy fog where you can't see very far ahead of you.

You have to stay close to Jesus Christ. You have to stay where you can see him and follow where he leads. Think about the disciples. They forsook all that they had.

They followed Jesus Christ. They heard powerful life-changing messages from this Jesus of Nazareth, this one they believed to be the Messiah.

He spoke. Never man spake like this man spake. And so they followed him and then he empowered them. They exercised these healing gifts and powers that were associated with the kingdom of heaven that was coming to earth.

They preached about the kingdom of heaven. They envisioned it in their minds. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. They preached it. They heralded it. They convinced their brothers and sisters. The kingdom of heaven has come.

[29 : 27] The Messiah is here. They believed it. They went from village to village preaching this message, preaching this message and yet they never saw it come to pass.

They never saw the kingdom of heaven on earth. They had experienced some of it with Christ. They saw signs of it. They were swallowed up in massive crowds.

Then they're alone on a mountain with Jesus Christ. One time they're crossing over the lake on a boat and the next time they're seeing him stand toe to toe with some of the highest political figures in the land in Jerusalem, the Pharisees and the chief priests confronting with them starting a war as it were.

It led them to perilous times. It led them to times to watch a crowd turn on Jesus Christ. One time where he went up they led him all the way up to the cliff like they were going to toss him off and then he just walked through the midst of him.

The disciples were probably just a little bit scared that day. A little shook up at what's going such confusion and then they crucify him and now they don't know what's happening and then he shows up and he's alive and then he expounds to them the scriptures.

[30 : 39] Hey guys, it behooved Christ to suffer. I had to die. I had to make the, do you see it now? And now their eyes are being opened to him teaching, opening and alleging.

It's showing from all of the law of Moses and the Psalms and the prophets what Christ had to do. Now turn to Acts chapter 1. Imagine these disciples, what they had gone through with Jesus Christ.

Preaching and traveling and believing and then disappointed but then he's alive and they ask this question in Acts chapter 1.

It's a legitimate question. Verse 6. When they therefore were come together they asked of him saying, Lord, will thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Is it time now? Because we're so confused right now. You took us on that three and a half year journey and it was really cool but then you were killed so we thought it was over.

[31 : 50] We thought, the two of them on the road to Emmaus and Luke 24, we thought it was him that was to be Christ but he's dead. They were confused. Now he's alive so okay and now we understand now this was in Moses and the prophets that had to happen so were you at this time?

Is it time for the kingdom now? Is that coming? And look what he said. Verse 7. He said unto them, It's not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power but ye shall receive power.

Here's your step. Ye shall receive power. After that the Holy Ghost has come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me. And you see that through the next several chapters.

They're witnessing that he's alive that he was the Christ, the Messiah. But what God didn't do was reveal to them, those men, the whole thing.

They kind of anticipated in their minds that it was happening, the kingdom's here. They believed it but it wasn't. It never happened. And they said, Is it time now?

[32 : 56] He said, Fellas, it's not for you to know. Take up your cross and let's take one step. I'll show you the next step you're supposed to take. Stick around Jerusalem.

The Holy Ghost is coming. And when he comes, you'll be filled with power. And you're going to be a witness. And you're going to take the next step. And one after another, step by step, the New Testament, one step at a time.

God reveals instructions. God reveals directions to these disciples. At times, they're preaching to crowds with incredible results. Multitudes are coming and joining the early church.

And then there's other times they're being beaten and imprisoned. And then this guy, Paul, Saul, that they were afraid of, then this guy shows up and completely blows their minds.

He shows up and said, Fellas, Peter, James, John, come here. We need to talk. Okay. What do you want to talk about? The Lord Jesus revealed something to me.

[34 : 08] And they're like, Nah, hold on. We walked with Jesus. He taught us. We know him. He knows us.

He's in us. He's filled us. He's empowered us. But you guys aren't listening. He revealed something to me. He showed something to me and you need to hear it. And those guys, don't you think, he did it privately because they were of reputation and he was being wise about that.

But now they have to have their minds blown about what God's doing now. One step at a time. One step at a time. Take up your cross and follow me.

Plans have changed, fellas. You thought it was this and it never worked out and then it turned into this and then it was take a step over here and now, before you know it, we're doing something different than we ever thought we've done in our lives.

This was not what we perceived the plan to be. This was not the message we were preaching a few years ago. And they change. And that's okay. And that's what it is.

[35 : 15] That's what following Jesus Christ is. It's adapting to one step after another as he directs, as he sees fit. In your mind, you think, well, I'm a fisherman so he did tell me I was going to be fishers of men and yeah, that makes sense and kind of cute and I'm going to do this.

But before you know it, God directs and leads a different direction. He says, let's go over here. Let's try something different. And what you'll do and what I'll do is say, but no, my gifts and talents are over here.

I went to school for this. This is what I know. And Christ says, the cross, that's what I told you to pick up. Not the education.

I don't need that. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called. I don't need any of that. And so one more thought here. We've got to hurry. When carrying your cross, you don't see to the end.

God doesn't give you all of that. And the only light you get is just incremental. But thirdly and finally, you can't sprint ahead. You can't get into this and make up for lost time.

[36 : 23] It's one step at a time. That's very important to think on and to believe and to hold on to. The Christian life is likened to a race, but that's a different metaphor.

That metaphor is about training and keeping your body under and going all out to receive the prize and finishing your course. That's a different, this metaphor is about death.

This is about denying yourself and taking up your cross and following, obediently following one step at a time. This metaphor reveals the slow process the Christian life is.

And in plainer words, and the strongest thing I want to say about this last thought is that God is never in a hurry, ever. He doesn't lead with urgency.

God does not force. He does not push. We've got to hurry up and get through this part. That's never God. Never. It's one step. One careful step at a time.

[37 : 29] If you feel pressure about anything in your Christian life, about God leading you to this, if you feel pressure, it's not from the Lord. It's not from the Lord.

There's a seducing spirit that's trying to get you to trip up and fall. It's common for Christians who get saved either later in life or who live in sin and then are backslidden.

They try to get right with God and they think, look at all the time I wasted. It's all going to burn up. I need to hurry up and get after it. I need to make up for lost time.

And in this analogy, you cannot carry your cross and run out ahead. You can't do that. It's just one step at a time. It might sound noble, but that persuasion is not of him that calleth you.

Bearing your cross is not a race. It's a discipline. Bearing your cross is a commitment and a sacrifice. It's a life of obedience and it's a life of dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 32] It's not a race. So if you want to find your life, if you want to find the life that God has for you, it's hidden. You can't see it.

It's out of view and God will not reveal it to you until you first surrender yourself and lay down all that you have. And when you do that, lose your life, die to self, lay your heart, lay your will at the cross of Jesus Christ and take up your cross, you begin to follow it as you do.

You'll find that it's the greatest life that you've ever known or could ever imagine. You'll find that where this is too hard for me, you'll find that he reaches out his hand.

You'll find that I can't take this part here, God. This is way too heavy. I didn't sign up for this. He'll give you grace and you'll feel that grace and you can get through it one step at a time.

Keep going forward no matter what comes. Follow Christ. So next week, I want to look at some things that are hidden from view, things that you cannot see or things you cannot understand until you do surrender, until you do take those steps and follow him.

[39 : 51] Tonight, it's just the concept of following him with that cross is not a big revelation. It's not the end. It's not the journey, but it's just making your way, trusting him, keeping your eyes on him.

Then next week, we'll learn a little bit about what is hidden in that life. What do you experience along that way? And it's the stuff that you can't predict.

It's in the book, but you don't know how it's going to turn out. And it's some of the good stuff, too, that you don't ever know or experience until you're in that submission. So we'll be dismissed with prayer.

And Lord willing, see you on Sunday. Let's pray. Father, we ask tonight that you'll take the words and the truth from your book and relate it to our hearts and sink it down in there to where we understand, to where we're willing to follow.

Help us not to fear your will. I pray that if anybody here is struggling with that or even just uncertain about it, that you'll give your peace and that they'll meet with you and surrender to you and learn to love you and trust you and follow you.

[41 : 02] And Lord, it's a good life to follow you. You're a good God. You've never done us wrong, not one time. And I know you won't. We're thankful that we have the word of God that gives us light and that teaches us the truth about you and prods us to doing something that we wouldn't otherwise want to do.

And so God, I pray that you'll receive glory from each of our lives for what we studied here tonight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. You're dismissed. Just!N' name is God for what we thought of God, that he'll receive glory above everything and that he says of the church to the church for what we studied and that he'll do and therefore to the church going into hopefully and then couldjut■.

Thank you, Alderman. I put his mouth down Yom andmart and■■■ with food and Mediterranean doing something and stuck with his heart with his boyemas and temporarily young Mant