

Take up your cross

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[0:00] Luke 9.23 Luke 9.23 Luke 9.23

Luke 9.23 Luke 9.23 he ranked in the priority scale. The Lord Jesus' call is uncompromising really, isn't it?

Be daring, be brave, deny yourself. It's telling us to give up, give over our right to decide what we will do, where we will go. It's really laying it on the altar, isn't it?

Deny yourself. What does it mean? Deny our self-trust, our self-independence, our self-reliance, our self-pursuits, our pride.

People like to think of themselves as the master of their own destiny, don't they? It's how supposedly successful people in the world would say they've set their course. I was thinking of that one too.

[2:55] We had a song item tonight. I did it my way. That's how people think, isn't it? They sing that song of self-glory, of self-pride.

Someone has said, it doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him.

All there is of him. And we need to let go of our own self, our own self-righteousness too, where even if we think we've arrived, even if we think we've got it all together, even if we think that we're a perfect Christian, if such a being exists, even if we think we're a super-Christian, then there's a danger we'll be self-righteous and we'll be prideful in our own self-glory that we've achieved, that we've arrived.

Better that we're always feeling that we're failing, that we're always feeling that we're inadequate, because we are truly inadequate, aren't we? All of us. Our denying of ourself is denying of our own will, our own way, and seeking his rather, seeking that he will be glorified.

The early Christians, for whom our Lord addressed really, some of those that he addressed with these words would go on to die. They would go on to die to themselves, but literally die by torture, by fire.

And in the Roman Colosseum, we know these words were not just words to gloss over, that the words that our Lord said here are words of life and words of death, but truly life, true life.

[4:35] So count the cost, he's saying here, count the cost of Christ, the cost of following Christ, of being a disciple. There was a preacher long ago who addressed a meeting that was a select group of people in some select club in London of, I suppose, well-to-do people.

And in this audience, as he arrived, he found the audience assembled, and everything was arranged to give his address. And he commenced his message with these words.

He said, Ladies and gentlemen, the entrance fee into the kingdom of heaven is nothing. The annual subscription is everything. It costs us nothing, but truly it cost Christ everything, didn't it?

And we are to lay our all on the altar. That is, the least we can do is to give our all to him. To learn to lean on Jesus, not on ourselves. Sadly, religion and religious works and religious bands will try to work our own way instead of rely and rest entirely on his work and put our all in his hands.

What does it say? You are not your own. You are bought with a price. What a price. You're priceless. The precious blood of Christ was shed for you.

[6:03] You are very precious. Very valued. Very valuable people. Each one here, each soul here is so valued. You are bought with a price.

Wow. You are very valuable in God's sight that Christ would pay his precious blood for we that know him. That we are not our own. We're no longer our own.

So to deny ourself really is accepting that fact, isn't it? That we are not our own anymore. And so our devotion to our Lord ought to be paramount.

That that is centered. That is central. That is foremost. That is primary in our thinking. Such that in comparison of our love for our Lord and the love for the nearest and dearest in our lives is such that that is such a lesser love that is counted in comparison as hatred.

He says that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength. And it's hard to get our head around how to contrast the love for our nearest and dearest Christ is such a lesser love that it's likened to hatred.

[7:18] That Christ is such that He's so preeminent that He's so glorified that He should be so esteemed and honoured and lifted up.

Deny yourself. That can mean take a risk of being rejected even by loved ones, family and friends that don't understand your devotion to Christ that they will scorn and reject you.

It's part of denying yourself really, isn't it? Because in our natural being, our natural state, we would find that impossible to do.

But yet, Christ is such that He is preeminent. He wants to be preeminent in our lives. So deny self, He says. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up His cross daily.

Take up His cross daily. The cross. We can gloss over that. Just a little gold cross, you hang around your neck as some might choose to.

[8:33] But the cross, what is it? It's an instrument of death. It's an instrument of death, of torture, of suffering. The cross, what does it mean? It means to be willing to suffer, to die.

Our Lord. What does the cross really mean? We can gloss over that. And for we, that He says to you, take up your cross, your cross, your cross, daily.

Take it up. Romans 6, 11, the preacher Paul says, likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead, indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

He says reckon yourselves dead. He talks elsewhere about how I die daily. He tells us, I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, Romans 12, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

He says present your bodies as a living sacrifice, wow, we can gloss over that too, can't we? It's a memory verse we might try to recall and we can just say it so glibly and yet, what does it mean?

[10:03] Living sacrifice, that we would be such that we would take up our cross. What does that mean?

Death to self. When someone took up a cross they were on the way to their own execution it speaks of a devotion beyond any comparison doesn't it?

And Paul says Galatians 2 verse 20 I am crucified with Christ crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me I am crucified with Christ he's made a confession there I am dead dead to sin I am crucified yet he says I die daily so there's almost a repeating of that dying isn't it? that daily dying to self notice our Lord says take up your cross daily elsewhere it doesn't include the word daily but in Luke 9 he says take up your cross daily notice daily every day every day we're making a choice every day we make choices what day do we have today it's only today so every today make it your decision today I will die daily today I will die today I will take up my cross today I will seek after God today I will live today for him for his glory who do we follow he says take up your cross take up your cross he says daily not just when it is convenient not just take it up one day and not so much the next or pick and choose but day after day after day and he makes changes in our lifestyle in our lives one day at a time when we think about it sometimes it's a bit overwhelming to living the

Christian life but if we just take one step after the other one step at a time one day at a time one hour at a time he'll help you through he'll help you live the life he's called us to a lifestyle of being a living sacrifice one day at a time moment by moment we are a Christian first that we count that as the priority unto him we rest on his daily strength day by day new day after new day commit every day to him we're talking about taking up your cross

[13:38] Paul says in Galatians 6 14 but God forbid that I should glory that I should glory save in the cross save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ Galatians 6 14 by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto

the world it's like it's the world is fenced off for me it's kind of how some have taken the meaning of that sense of it's crucified unto me the world is dead to me and I am dead to the world I'm dead my life is hidden with Christ in God deny yourself take up your cross the cross your cross your cross your cross he says take up your cross take up his cross rather in this text here but intending it to mean your cross your cross your cross we all call to a cross our cross our own cross what is the cross that

God has called us to what is that burden your burden my burden they might be different but God has got a cross for you he's called you to it he's called you to take it to take it up don't shy away from the cross take it up God will give you the strength to carry it amen he will carry it with you we know I love the scripture that says you know as we hear of our Lord as he calls to his people and he says take my yoke he says come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden Matthew 11 28 and I will give you rest rest take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light I think sometimes we take up a burden and a yoke that is not his and when it is heavy and when it is burdensome it's not

God's yoke it's not God's burden his yoke is easy and his burden is light we can all get burdened down and loaded up with others expectations or expectations of systems or people even of our own self making and we end up loaded down and stooped down with a burden that is not of him but his burden is easy his yoke is easy his burden is light and he will help you he will give you rest I will give you rest rest unto your souls so that burden that he gives to us will be a burden that he'll help us to carry he'll give us the strength to bear it there was a preacher a professor in a seminary a bible school who did a survey of church mission statements and he looked at various statements of different churches and ministries what they were saying about themselves and how they presented themselves to the world and what he found astonished him that the churches described their mission in terms of being warm and welcoming communities of their commitment to serve the lord by ministering to the needs of the community their efforts to provide educational programs fellowship opportunities and weekly worship they declared themselves committed to inspiring biblical preaching but he says he did not find a church which mentioned the call to suffer in Jesus name what was missing from practically every mission statement was the cross now now that I've read that I have to check what our website says we're called to the cross we're called to the cross people aren't we we're called to the cross to the cross take up your cross we sometimes neglect that don't we we're called to surrender to give up our sin to do God's will if if we suffer we will reign with him as someone has said no cross no crown there's a crown for those who suffer and the cross before the crown so brother sister if you're feeling like your cross is is hard one day the crown one day the crown amen the cross it means pain it's heavy it's costly but he'll help you he'll help you and he'll give you rest because his yoke is easy his burden is light so take up your cross deny yourself take up your cross number three he says follow me follow me again we can gloss over this one too and say it so lightly yes I follow

Jesus he says follow me no turning back no turning back a man wrote in a notebook as a young Christian that all the claims of Christ can be summed up in two words follow me can be summed up in that simple call to follow and when he wrote this as a young Christian man all the claims of Christ can be summed up in two words follow me in the margin of his notebook he placed a question mark he wondered whether that was an overstatement and then later in life as he was preparing to move into his retirement living he opened his notebook again and he re-read the statement and he erased the question mark from the margin and he said I am convinced that the only way to win the world is to understand Jesus' challenge and take seriously all that it implies follow me follow me do we follow

[20:01] Jesus truly follow me in other words obey me follow me walk in my steps it says he set his face to go there to the cross Barry setting his face to go there to Jerusalem Jesus did that he set his face to go there in Luke 9 51 Luke 9 51 when the time was come he should be received up he steadfastly steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem he knew what was there he knew the suffering the beating the bruising the bleeding the dying the pain shame John 19 17 and he bearing his cross John 19 17 and he

bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha the place of a skull this is a place of death of of the termination of life and he set his face steadfastly he bearing his cross went forth to a place called the place of a skull

Golgotha and he says to you to me follow me follow me God's people ought to be willing to suffer shame for his name willing to be threatened and beaten in some places even today it's happening now for our brothers and sisters in other lands follow me do we follow any steps if we would but follow any steps we can be assured follow any steps let me digress as I read it an illustration of this as it's pictured in a world war ii story how a group of men were part of a reconnaissance team to scout out the enemy positions the troop positions of the german army and the patrol left early in this winter morning snow on the ground and as they departed the relative safety of their own front lines the patrol had to cross an american mine field the mines had been clearly marked for their safe passage and therefore very cautiously they made their way around the explosives on the other side of the field they entered the woods and tensely approached the german positions they not advanced very far when a machine gun nest opened up and pinned them on the ground and for hours they lay unable to advance or retreat and as time marched by ever so slowly the blue sky became slate grey and snow clouds began to form by mid afternoon there was a virtual blizzard and visibility was very limited and as the snow came down heavier the platoon leader decided they had to risk a retreat under cover of the storm by a saving act of nature they were able to furtively slip away from the deadly

German crossfire and return to the American lines however when they reached the edge of the woods and looked out across the pasture land containing the minefield the deep snow had completely covered all the markings that indicated where the mines were planted the platoon leader sensed that a German offensive was imminent and if his patrol waited until the next day to cross the minefield they could easily be wiped out by dawn so although it was very risky they only had one option to take their chances to cross the minefield before darkness totally enveloped them and the lieutenant called the men together he informed them how he was going to lead them single file across the meadow and he sternly ordered them to walk 30 yards behind each other and most important to place their boots exactly in the imprints left by his own and that way if the mine exploded only he would detonate it and he alone would be killed slowly the reconnaissance team advanced across the meadow only one set of footprints was left by the entire platoon and miraculously they all made it safely to safety the next day the men woke and they found that the boot prints could still be seen in the snow several hours later the engineers came and they discovered that the entire platoon had neatly stepped over a mine miraculously avoiding detonating it its deadly explosive power they had followed in their leaders footsteps and they had reached home safely our

Lord Jesus says follow me and tells us elsewhere how 1 Peter 2 21 for even here unto where ye called because Christ also hath suffered for us leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps we should follow his steps he says follow me he went to the cross he went through great agony he went through great suffering and with great resolve he set his face he! set his! as a flint he set his face towards Jerusalem and he says follow follow me sometimes we can feel like we're walking through a minefield but if we would just follow in his footsteps he would follow in his footsteps his footsteps make that the priority to follow where he has gone to walk with him to walk in his steps no matter what the cost no matter what follow me some only want to be followers on their own terms when they want to when they want to when it is convenient for them when something more important has not come up when they don't have an excuse not to then they will follow but he says follow me full stop follow me no ifs and buts follow me and to follow Jesus is to be led by the spirit to be led by his word to take it seriously to take it like we believe it that we believe what it says that we determine persistently and patiently to wait on

[26:45] God to find where he leads to know where he's leading and guiding to follow in his steps to be like him to be like him in whatever capacity we can to be Christ like to obey the Lord's voice instead of our own will so we need to be sure we're tuning in don't we tune in most people tune into the W I F M what's in it for me I'll follow if it's easy I'll follow if I'm going to get something out of it but he says follow me full stop

follow me even if it's costly even if it's hard even if it's feels goes against the grain it goes against what we deep down want at times that we almost have to blank out that voice and hear his voice instead as we listen for his word his will not our will that he will guide our thoughts our choices our words our works that following

Jesus will be the primary consideration for what we choose to do and we will show his glory to the world following Jesus it's about living for God someone has said we've learned to soar through the air like birds to swim through the seas like fish to soar through space like commons now it is high time we're allowed to walk the earth as children of God to walk the earth as children of God our Lord was willing to take the path to the cross he didn't shy away he said he said he said he steadfastly he knew what it meant to take the path of sacrifice and for us it can mean the path of duty!

a gladsome service a joyful service a privilege to serve to take the higher path to follow Jesus is the ultimate isn't it?

It's the ultimate and absolute best way to live to know that blessing that we're following Jesus that we can be bold for the truth that we can spend our lives wisely for his glory that we can consciously choose his path in refusing the opposite life of pleasing ourself rather please God please God and what a satisfaction we find to know that we've pleased God to choose to follow God rather than the pleasures of Egypt as it were to choose rather the reproach of Christ as Moses to choose rather than consciously choose that consciously make that our choice to walk in his steps to be like him to be sensitive to God to be responsive to him and his grace day by day in the daily machinations of life to make that conscious deliberate volition

I will choose his way I will follow him to surrender to God and his will and in doing that you can likely experience that you will be hated that you will be reviled you will be reviled as you surrender to God and his will don't expect it to be a cushy number but yet trust him follow him Luke 21 17 tells you what you can expect and you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake he laid it on the line there didn't he Luke 21 17 you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake he was telling the disciples this is how it is this is how it's going to be and he says trust me no matter what no matter what so whilst you might experience some temporary persecution and suffering hardship yet no cross no crown count it all joy count it all joy it's easy for me to say that and for some you're going through it right now you're going through the ring but

[31:28] I can only say what God says to you God says this he says count it all joy count it all joy even when you're going through those times of trial those times of tribulation those times of temptation where everything's hard for you count it yeah joy trust me no matter what he's what he's telling us he calls us to real life real peace real joy whilst for some time for some earthly season there will be loss there will be loss there will be pain there will be cost what did the cross mean cost so costly isn't it yeah he didn't shy away from it for you for me there will be comforts to give up first the cross then the crown there's a story told of a great at the time as the world would reckon it a king and emperor called

Charmaine and the archaeologists discovered the tomb of Charmaine but I guess that's how you say it is it Charmaine however it's this great 8th and 9th century king and emperor of France when the tomb was opened they broke it open and they saw this tomb as they made the door wide open this door that had been closed for centuries and the man who entered in found an amazing thing they saw great treasures of the kingdom but in the centre of this large vault this mausoleum this tomb was a throne and seated upon it was the skeleton of Charmaine so they say and the king was seated with an open bible and a bony finger points it to these words so it says here for what shall it profit a man if she'll gain the whole world and lose his own soul what shall it profit a man what is truly at stake what is truly the cost the cost of denying christ the cost of rejecting the cost of refusing christ the cost of not following christ what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world yet lose his own soul follow in his steps for even here unto we called because christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that you should follow in his steps follow his steps 1 peter 2 21 so let me just repeat to close the key points here he said to them all if any man will come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me take up his cross daily and follow me do we live a life that's

all about pleasing ourself pleasing our flesh pleasing our own vain
I'm talking about me our own vain glory our own self-interest what do we think how can I please god
with my life what can I do to please him do we take up our cross be willing to put up with temporary
inconvenience discomfort to face embarrassment when we seek to tell others about the saving
message or do we shy away from that which might be a bit uncomfortable a bit difficult he says take
up your cross your cross your cross daily daily daily and follow me follow me walk in his steps the
way that he has trod the life that he lived the way that he spoke the way that he interacted his
kindness his love his relationships with people his person person of christ christ in you christ in you
christ in you the hope of glory that you are jesus to your world let's follow him amen lord we thank
you that your call is still the same and resounding across the world so all who will hear it lord we
know your call is to deny ourself to leave off our own way of living and thinking be more conscious
of what you would have us to be to do rather to please you above all else lord to be a disciple a
learner to learn of you lord to take up our cross and in a daily way day by day to have a conscious
effort a conscious decision a conscious choosing to rather please god to take that inconvenience
and discomfort the heaviness of sorts yet knowing that you carry the heavy part and you give us
rest even as we serve serve gladly and as we follow you lord we know where you ultimately are we
will be with you as we know we'll step one day across as it were a river there is but one step
between us and death lord and yet it's a step into life into the everlasting afterlife as it were that we
already have everlasting life even in the present tense now and yet lord let us follow you as we take
time to hear your word to put it into action to put it into practice lord guide our steps that we might
walk in your truth walk in the light walk in love and know your favour and grace every step of the
way until that final step into glory to be in your presence for eternity and yet lord to receive that
welcome that reception one day lord we thank you for every brother for every sister here we know
one day we know that one day people that are in this number now will go ahead of us to glory
there's every chance of that this might be our last moment our last meeting with some before they
enter into eternity lord that each one would know the peace of god that whether we walk on earth or
walk in heaven we'll walk with you in jesus name
amen