

Carry Your Cross

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[0:00] Luke 9 verse 23, the Lord Jesus said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. The condemned person was forced! to carry his own cross to where he would be nailed to it and die upon it while crowds watched. It was an awful thing to carry a cross because it was a one way trip. Stand there in the crowd as you see the person carrying the cross. See this awful sight, someone carrying their own execution method on a one way journey to a slow death. He would not be coming back a shocking, disturbing, uncomfortable death. And our Lord asked his people in this verse Luke 9 verse 23 to take up their cross and follow him. Carrying the cross means to take a different path. It means counting the cross. It means absolute self-denial. The Lord Jesus asked of us, are you committed enough to die for me? We know in some countries around the world today that believers really and truly pay the price in their own blood for their faith in Christ. And he calls us too, likewise, to die to our own selfish nature as we become truly committed to Christ in all that we do. It's not the path of ease and applause and comfort and worldliness. This is the path to the cross. The path to the cross. The way of the cross.

And friends, it's really a challenge for us because the Christian life sometimes can mean carrying the cross. It can mean making a sacrifice. Have you got what it takes to be an out and out Christian? A true blue, full on Christian. It's a narrow path. The road less travelled.

There's not too many on this narrow way. It's not the broad and popular way. The wide and easy, comfortable way. It's the narrow, tough and strict way. The narrow way. The path of holiness. The way of the cross. It's a pilgrim walk. Paul said, I die daily. He was familiar with the fellowship of his sufferings. And this isn't a message at times that is popular in our world today. We'd rather hear something that tickles the ears and gives us a bit of a warm and fuzzy. But this is the message of Christ to us. Our Saviour. His demand of us. His expectation of us. But we'll tread that path to pay that price. And this road, it can be an unpopular road to take the road of the cross. It can be an unpopular pathway to tread this way. This way of uncompromising. This way that is unpleasant. That is lonely. It's not an easy path to take.

And our Lord was saying, as some commentator put it, if anyone wishes to come after me, let him be prepared to be let out to public execution. Following my example. That's what it means. And Christians willing to count the cost. And be willing to brave the storms.

[3:20] And brave the opposition. And brave the discomfort of following Christ. And in our Australia of today, it's not too common that we face challenges like that. But if they face us, if they come across our path, let's tread forward and strictly and strongly in that path. It's like Christ.

He set his face as a flint towards Jerusalem. He knew what was waiting him there. And likewise for you and me, it might mean persecution at times to follow Christ. It might mean some suffering. And for some believers in our world today, really and truly, it means death for Christ. That's what it means to follow him. Are you willing to suffer and die for the cause of Christ?

The Lord Jesus says in Matthew 10, 38, he said, he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. This is part of what it means to being a Christian. It means a total commitment to being a living sacrifice. Many Christians are more committed to their TV sets or having a lie in than they are to God and obedience to his word.

Every believer is called to make every sacrifice, to give every service, to weather every storm, to devote every moment and to being what the Lord Jesus would desire for them.

[4:51] And it can be a lonesome path. Sometimes it might mean opposition from your own family, from friends. It might be an uncomfortable thing, but without this dedication, our Lord says, he is not worthy of me. What is the cross? It's the symbol of ultimate suffering.

There is that pain there. The pain of the nails, the spasms through the muscles, the dehydration of the body as you slowly suffer to death. The pressure on the heart and the lungs just to breathe, just to gain some comfort. It was an awful death to die. The agony was excruciating.

And there is much that must be suffered to follow Christ. It could mean mocking of friends. As a young Christian, I know that at school there was mocking at times for following Christ.

It might mean being forsaken, being despised, rejected of men as our Saviour was. And that is the path that he caused you to tread, that path. On that path you will face criticism.

It might mean walking between the gainsayers and the fault finders, the mockers, and people who are deriding and jeering at you for following him. But let that not put you off. Let it make you even stronger, ever more committed, ever stronger.

[6:16] Take his way, though it may mean a way of pain and suffering, hardship, going without the camp. That's where Christ went as he was treated like a leper without the camp.

Unwanted, rejected, forsaken, suffering the reproach, the loss, disappointment, discouragement and difficulty. As it says, his own friends forsook him and fled, his own disciples.

We need to take the cross. Take that cross, that penalty, that emblem of suffering, of following the Saviour. Take it up. You cannot give it to someone else to carry for you.

The Lord Jesus says, take up your cross daily and follow me. You cannot give it to someone else, your father, your mother, your friend, other church members or society.

You have to take it up. You have to take up that cross and carry it for the Lord. So don't be disappointed when you suffer grief at times.

[7:16] It could mean heartache, troubles of various kinds, burdens, sorrows, rejection. Let it make you ever stronger, ever more determined. Take it up. Take up that cross. Walk that pilgrim roadway.

Tread that pathway in his bloodstained footsteps. Follow in his steps. And do not weary or stumble. Keep pressing on the upward way.

Friends, I just want to urge you in this simple message to take that pilgrim pathway. It's a path of faith. The path of love. A path of commitment. Of surrender.

Of sacrifice. And it is truly the path of victory. As our Saviour, we know, endured the cross, despising the shame. And yet, it was for the joy that was set before him.

As he knew that you would be saved. That I would be saved. That we would have his wonderful gift of salvation. And as we know, death could not hold him. He broke the chains of death.

[8:16] The stone rolled away. And it could not hold him in the tomb. And he rose triumphant over death and hell and Satan. Glorious victory was his.

And likewise too, for you, for me, the path of the cross is the path of victory. The Lord will urge you on to that finishing line. As it says that we look unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our fame.

And friends, tonight, he will help you to carry that cross. As it says in the word of God, he says, Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden. And I will give you rest.

Rest unto your souls. And he says that we should take, as he says, Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart.

And he says that my yoke is easy and my burden is light. So whatever the Lord Jesus asked you to carry in your life, he will help you to take the load of it.

[9:14] He will take the lion's share of that load, of that weight. And see you through. Be encouraged today. Be encouraged in Christ to tread that pathway of the cross, to take it up as a personal thing, your cross, daily, and follow him.

Be encouraged in Christ. Thank you.