

Bearing Your Cross - Luke 9:22-26

7-12-15 AM

In Luke 9 we read a command from Jesus that sums up our Christian walk: if we wish to follow Him we must (1) deny ourselves, (2) take up our cross (daily) and (3) follow Jesus. All three of these points are of great importance, but our thoughts here focus on that middle point: what does it mean to take up our cross?

Let us not ignore the first and last points, as they are directly tied to the central idea. We deny ourselves by living not for ourselves, but for Christ. Paul spoke of being “crucified with Christ” in Galatians 2:20. As well, that third point, “Follow Me”, is the simplest summary of Christianity. Consider Peter’s admonition in 1 Peter 2:21-23 when we are told that Christ left us “an example for you to follow in His steps”.

But let us focus here on that middle point, taking up a cross. Typically, we use this language as a metaphor for various burdens we bear. Sometimes we express our daily struggles this way (Galatians 6:4-5). Also, it can be a means of expressing the burdens we sometimes have in serving God (John 15:20). We know that the Christian life is one of service and sacrifice; these too can be great burdens (Luke 18:28-30).

But perhaps there is another view of this statement that we can receive. Consider that to the hearers of this message, Jesus had not yet died on the cross, and the burden of the cross from that perspective was unknown. Instead, they could only see the cross as a worldly instrument of death. Why would Jesus tell them to take up an instrument of death with them every day? We can make a conclusion from this: that Jesus is telling His disciples to have an ever-present mind towards the end of our lives in order to serve him.

Scriptures often point to a need for a servant of God to be aware of death. In Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 we are told that it is a good thing to be aware of our fate in life. In Psalm 90:12 David asked God to help him to be aware of the finite number of days in his life. Paul implores the Romans in Romans 14:10-12 to be ever mindful of the judgment and a day of reckoning.

A mindfulness of death causes us to keep our life in perspective. The writer of Ecclesiastes spoke in the first three chapters of the frivolity of life; his repeated mantra was “meaningless, meaningless” when it came to the pursuits of life. But this mindset is not meant to be one of gloom; quite the opposite, it should stir in us a hope of our calling. When Paul faced the end of his life, he repeatedly spoke not of what was past, but of what was to come (2 Timothy 1:12, 4:7-8).

IF we desire to follow Jesus, we need to learn to deny ourselves, take up our mindfulness of the end of life, and follow in the pattern of the life of Jesus. Thereby we can inherit the eternal glory of God.