

"CARRY YOUR CROSS"

Jonathan Landis

10/13/05

Matthew 16:21-28

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

[22] Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

[23] Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

[24] Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [25] For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. [26] What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? [27] For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. [28] I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Peter didn't get it. Jesus was explaining to his disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and He was going to be crucified there, but He would rise again. Peter, along with the other disciples, was expecting Jesus to take out the Roman Empire and set up a Kingdom ruled by Israel on earth. That is what they expected the Messiah to do, but that wasn't God's plan. God had a different plan. His plan meant that Christ had to die, and in His death He would pay the price for our sin, and then on the third day He would **bust death wide open** and rise again.

So Peter rebukes Jesus, "No way Jesus!!! You can't die. We've got plans for You." Jesus answered back quickly, "No Peter, you've got it wrong... you've got the devils ideas. You have the ideas of man in mind, but I'm walking in the plan of God." You see Christ knew He had to die, because this was the plan of the Father, but it doesn't stop there. Listen to what Jesus had to say next...

Vs. [24] Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Illustration: "Passion" clip (Jesus carrying His cross)

Not only did Jesus say that He had to die, but He went on to say that anyone who follows Him has to carry their cross too!!! That doesn't sound like fun.

To carry our cross means we have to deny ourselves. We have to give up our own desires to pursue the will of God. To carry our cross means that sometimes in our walk with God we will have to make choices that will be hard to make, even painful to our flesh. To carry our cross means that we have to flee from sin, because we will be rewarded or judged for what we do in this life.

[27] For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Each person will be rewarded (or punished) according to what he has done. Everything we do now will have affect in eternity. If we do good, and lift up Christ we will be rewarded, but if we disobey God and seek only our own selfish desires we will receive NO reward.

I am dead set on saving up rewards for Heaven. The things of this world are fading, they don't last, but the things of eternity are forever. Jesus is going to reward those who serve Him well in this life. If we are faithful now with little things, we will be rulers of much more, both in this life, and even more in eternity.

Matthew 25:21

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

So eternal reward, or no reward... the choice is up to you!!! What will you do with the time you've been given???

Will you **carry your cross**, or will you just live for self???

Will you lay down your RIGHTS, even to the point of suffering for the sake of Christ???. Will you let people make fun of you or ignore you because of your faith? Will you be willing to love the school loser, even though it's not a popular thing to do???

Will you give up your DESIRES??? Sometimes you can't have what you want when you are carrying your cross. Christ may ask you to lay down something you enjoy for Him.

Ex.) Ms. Andrea-Basketball, Me-Guitar

Even something good, like basketball, or a guitar, can be a distraction or an idol at times. We should let NOTHING come between us and God. Whether it's friends, or sports, or music, or television... nothing is worth it. We must make a choice. Do we love God, or that TV show more???. Do we love God, or that boyfriend or girlfriend more???

I'm not saying you have to give up everything... I'm just challenging you to look inside your heart and make sure that there is NOTHING that matters more to you than God. And if the thought of going without it for a while sounds impossible, then maybe that's just what you need. (It's called fasting!)

Will you crucify your SINS??? Maybe you have something in your life that constantly plagues you... that one sin that you can't seem to get rid of. It's your PET sin... that one thing that always seems to get the best of you. You always feel bad after you do it, but you do it again anyway. Tonight is the time to crucify that thing.

Altar Call: Large Wooden Cross, nails, small pieces of paper.

We're all going to take a moment to write on these papers anything that may be a Right, a Distraction, or most of all A SIN that we need to crucify tonight. After you've written your stuff on there fold it so nobody can see what it says and then come up here and nail it to this cross. We're taking up our crosses tonight and laying down anything that would come between us and God.