

## Session 4: Following Jesus -- Taking Up The Cross

Then Jesus called the crowd to Him along with His disciples, and He told them, **"If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."** Mark 8:34

Luke emphasises that this is not just a one-off event, but a daily task and a continual process:

Then Jesus said to all of them, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and **take up his cross daily** and follow Me. Luke 9:23

What does it mean for us to take up our cross?

### 1. Repentance – ‘Saying Sorry’

#### Apology

...five basic languages of apology: expressing regret, accepting responsibility, making restitution, genuinely repenting, and requesting forgiveness (cf. The Five Languages of Apology, Gary Chapman)

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" **But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness."** Then he consented. Matt. 3:13-15

God incarnate submitted to a ‘baptism of repentance’ – God said sorry!

Not that God had done anything wrong, but He made the initial move of apology which began the process of reconciliation and restoration.

Are there people you need to apologise to? – even if it's not clear who exactly is in the wrong!

#### Forgiveness

When they came to the place called Calvary, **there they crucified Him... But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."** Luke 23:33-34a

"And when you stand praying, **if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them**, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. But **if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.**" Mark 11:25-26

**Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you**, in order to bring glory to God. Romans 15:7

#### Simple Repentance

The biblical word for ‘repentance’ is μετανοεῖτε (metanoete): to change one's mind/purpose,

not **paenitemini** (Latin): do *paenitentia*, do penance

Understanding this triggered the Reformation! And can again release Revival!

i. **Repent:** **"Repent and believe in the gospel."** Mark 1:14b-15

ii. **Receive:**

**"Let us come boldly before the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy"** Hebrews 4:16

iii. **Resist:** **"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."** James 4:7

iv. **Replace:**

**"Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."** Ephesians 4:22-24

Confession

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

But ***if we confess our sins***, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. 1 John 1:8-9

Therefore ***confess your sins to each other and pray for each other*** so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16

Restitution

Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, ***if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen***, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Ezekiel 33:14-15

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And ***if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.***" And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:8-10

Reconciliation

"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; ***first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering....***" Matthew 5:23-24

## 2. Opposition and Persecution

To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you... Philippians 3:1

Opposition is Assured

"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, ***they will also persecute you.***" John 15:20

"Indeed, ***all*** who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" 2 Timothy 3:12

Opposition is a Blessing

***"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** Matthew 5:10-11

***If you are insulted*** because of the name of Christ, ***you are blessed***, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 1 Peter 4:14

Opposition is a Catalyst

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but ***if it dies, it bears much fruit.***" John 12:24

To be specific, opposition itself isn't the catalyst, but rather our perseverance in spite of opposition.

"Do not be frightened in anything by your opponents. ***This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.***" Philippians 1:28

Opposition is a Delight

(At least after you believe and understand that opposition is assured, a blessing, and a catalyst.)

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, ***rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*** Acts 5:41

### 3. Sacrificial Giving & Generosity

*Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, **did not consider equality with God a thing to cling onto, but made Himself of no reputation**, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* Philippians 2:6-8

*But since you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you --**see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you**, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*** 2 Corinthians 8:7-9

Six characteristics of gospel GIVERS:

#### Gleeful

God loves a **cheerful** [ἱλαρόν (hilaron) – from which we get the word ‘hilarious’] giver. 2 Cor. 9:7

#### Invisible

*So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honoured by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But when you give to the poor, **do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret...*** Matthew 6:2-4a

#### Voluntary

*Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; **not grudgingly or under compulsion...*** 2 Corinthians 9:7a

#### Extravaqant

*For this perfume might have been sold for **over three hundred denarii** [a year's wages], and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me.* Mark 14:5-6

#### Rewarded

*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over...For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.* Luke 6:38

*...and your Father who sees what is done in secret **will reward you.*** Matthew 6:4b

#### Sacrificial

*This poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but **she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.*** Luke 21:3-4

*"No, but I will buy it from you for a price. **I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.**"* 2 Samuel 24:24

### 4. Surrendering Family & Friends

Jesus was forsaken by His Father on the cross:

*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"* Mark 15:34

And he was misunderstood and disbelieved by his family before that:

*When his family heard, they went to take charge of him, saying, "He is out of his mind." Mark 3:21  
...not even his brothers believed in him.* John 7:5

**"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."** Matthew 10:37 (cf. Luke 14:26)

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or **brothers or sisters or mother or father or children** or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. Mark 10:29-30

## 5. Looking Foolish

Jesus was insulted and mocked on the cross:

Those who passed by **hurled insults** at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law **mocked him among themselves**. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Mark 15:29-31

Paul talked about the foolishness of the cross:

For **the message of the cross is foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, **God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.** 1 Corinthians 1:18-21

King David refused to be ashamed of his undignified dancing before the Lord, even when his wife mocked him:

I will become **even more undignified than this**, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes... 2 Sam. 6:22

## 6. Complete Surrender

And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. **Yet not what I will, but what you will.**" Mark 14:36

**I have been crucified with Christ.** It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Gal. 2:20

...whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, **I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But **one thing I do**: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:7-14