

The Commitment to Discipleship

Luke 9: 23-26

Let me begin by asking, how many Christians do you know? That is a difficult question isn't it? Now it seems that everyone you talk to concerning the Lord has had some type of experience. Well, yes I'm a Christian; I was baptized and joined the church. I attend church on a regular basis.

So, if there are so many Christians in the world why has it grown so dark? We are living in the darkest days America has ever known. Our children are being bombarded with the world's influence. Drugs, alcohol, sexual perversion, and greed have found a prominent place in our modern society. The simple truth is: our nation has become so dark due to an absence of light.

Now we can sit back and complain all we want, but we are not the first society or culture to deal with the utter darkness of sin. There have been many times of devastating darkness throughout history, including the persecution of the early church and the Dark Ages. Despite those times of darkness, we have heard the gospel message. The Word of God prevailed in the lives of those who refused to succumb to the evil influence of this world. We are here today because someone made the choice to live for God.

There is much that could be said about the need in America, but the one thing she needs above all else is the Lord. This will never happen as long as the church of Christ sits idly by and watches the world sink deeper in sin and bound for hell! It is my prayer that the born again believers of this congregation will rise to the occasion. We need more than just transparent, run of the mill Christians; we need those who've been changed and are committed to the cause of Christ. I want to consider the [principles](#) Jesus revealed in the text as we think on: [The Commitment to Discipleship](#).

I. The Purpose of Life (23) – *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* There are many who are truly saved, but are accomplishing very little for the Lord. Their spiritual lives are no different today than they were at the moment of salvation. Consider:

A. The Choice Involved – *If any man will come after me.* Clearly this involves a personal choice. The word **will** means “*to desire, to resolve, or to determine.*” The first thing we must do is determine in our hearts that this is our desire. This is a deliberate choice, a determined resolve to follow Christ.

- I don't know what you want in life, but I want to live a life that pleases my Lord. This text has spoken to me. There are times when I can do fairly well, but there are others when my resolve isn't what it ought to be. Have things gotten bad enough for us to determine in our hearts to make a difference and live for God? If they haven't I really don't know what it will take!

B. The Constraint Involved – **Let him deny himself.** *That is to disown, forsake, reject, restrain, or simply do without.* These are strong words. They carry the idea of subduing our fleshly desires and disregarding what the flesh would have us do. It isn't easy to forsake ourselves, to restrain the flesh, and do without our desires.

- Do you realize that you are your own greatest hindrance? We like to give Satan the credit many times, but often he doesn't have to do a thing because we do it for him! Notice what the Apostle Paul said in [Rom.7:18-21](#). Can you relate to what Paul has described? Sure, we all can. Paul fought the same battles we deal with every day. We wake up each morning facing a battle with the flesh. When we were saved we became a new creature in Christ, but the flesh wasn't saved. It still carries those same sinful desires.
- Much of the problem with our Christian influence is that we have a problem denying the flesh. I realize that it is much easier said than done, but that is what Jesus requires. Now, denying ourselves involves more than laying aside a few of our habits or desires. We are to bring ourselves, the whole of our being, into the subjection of the Lord. By saying "no" to myself, I am saying "yes" to the Lord. When we can do that, it allows Jesus the freedom to rule and reign in our lives.

C. The Cross Involved – **Let him...take up his cross daily.** We may do fairly well up to this point, but here is where most Christians draw the line. Take a moment to consider the thoughts that must've ran through the peoples' minds as Jesus made this statement. They were no strangers to Roman crosses and the awful crucifixions. In that day, the roads would often be filled with crosses as men hung there dying. The cross was a cruel instrument of death.

- Now, I had always looked at this verse as Jesus expecting me to bear my burdens, and there is application for that. There is much in life that we must endure for the cause of Christ. God often uses the times of difficulty to mature our faith and conform us to the image of His Son. We must bear our burdens, but remember the cross is an instrument of death. Taking up our cross doesn't involve only bearing burdens, it involves dying to ourselves.
- [Rom.6:6](#) – **Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.** [Gal.2:20](#) – **I am 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.** [Rom.12:1](#) – **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.** We must die daily.

D. The Commitment Involved – There is an important word recorded in Luke's account that isn't found in the other gospels. We are to take up our cross **daily**, and **follow** Jesus. This is not for the convenience Christian or shallow counterfeits. This is for those who are genuinely committed.

- The phrase “**follow me**” means “*to be a follower or companion, to be a disciple.*” It has the idea of *actively seeking fellowship with Christ and reflecting His likeness.* We are to seek after the Lord with a desire to become more like Him daily.
- This isn’t an idle task; we can’t follow Christ without action. It will require effort and work on our part. The flesh has no desire to follow Jesus and it certainly doesn’t want to become like Him. There will be many obstacles that we shall face, but we must be determined to overcome.
- The light in our world would be much brighter if the Christian would follow Christ. Keep in mind that we must first make that conscious choice, deny ourselves, and take up our cross before we can follow Jesus. Salvation was a free gift, but living for the Lord requires sacrifice. Are we willing to pay the price for the needs of our day?

II. The Paradox of Life (24-25) – Here Jesus reveals a paradox, a seeming contradiction, but in fact it is truth. Notice:

- **Luke 9:24 – For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.** I know this world looks at us and wonders why we do what we do. Why would anyone deny themselves the pleasures of this life? Why do we give of ourselves to the cause of Christ? Why do we refuse to embrace the ways of this world and go against the grain?
- We must lose our lives in order to gain life in Christ. I’m glad that I have more than what this world has to offer. There is pleasure in this life, but it is only for a season. There is coming a day when all will stand before God. The only thing that will matter is our relationship with Christ.
- **Luke 9:25 – For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?** There are millions alive today who have chosen to save their life of pleasure rather than die to self and live with Christ. They are consumed with only one thing, the desires of this world. They are like the rich man in **Luke 12:19-20 – And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.** ^[20] **But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?** Sadly one day they will die and leave it all behind. All of the wealth this world can provide will not be enough to secure their salvation.

III. The Prominence of Life (26) – **For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.** In these final words Jesus presents a profound and sobering realization. Those who accept Him in this life will be rewarded in the life to come and those who deny Him will be rejected.

- Sadly, many in our day are **ashamed** to identify with Christ. This is a strong word that implies a strong personality of those who possess it. It literally means “*unwilling or restrained because of fear of shame, ridicule, or disapproval.*” Many will not identify with the Lord because they are ashamed to deny themselves and live godly in the presence of others. Many today are

more concerned about the temporal approval of mankind than they are the eternal approval of God. They would rather be accepted in this life and spend eternity in hell than to suffer ridicule and shame for Christ.

- Christ will return just as He said; and when He does, He will judge those who rejected Him. You may feel as if you have life figured out. You may feel on top of the world, but one day you will stand before a holy God in judgment. If you were ashamed of Him in this life, He will be ashamed of you in the life to come. You will be rejected of the Lord and separated forever in eternal condemnation and torment in hell.
- The life you live and the choices you make today could very well have eternal implications. If you reject the Lord today and die in your sin, hell will be your home. There will be no second chances or hope of reprieve. The lost will not enter that heavenly city. Jesus will declare unto you, "Depart, I never knew you."
- Child of God it may seem as if our efforts are in vain. You may feel as if you can't make a difference anyway. Let me encourage you to consider what you have in Christ. It will all be worth it when we hear our blessed Lord say well done, enter in to the joys of the Lord. [Mat.19:29](#) – **And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.**

Conclusion: The benefits of God far outweigh the troubles we must endure in this life. Are you willing to step up and become a committed disciple? Things are going to continue to get worse, but we cannot abandon what the Lord has called us to do. I pray that we will determine to make a difference in the time we have left!

Maybe you are here today and you can't begin to follow Christ because you have never trusted Him in salvation. Is the life you're living worth an eternity in hell? Are the pleasures of this life worth being rejected of God? Now is the time for salvation. Now is the time to come to Christ and begin to live for Him. Christian are you living for the Lord or for yourself? Why not come today and do business with the Lord?