

Bearing Our Cross for Jesus

Intro: Jesus bore His cross toward Golgotha until, in his battered and weakened state, He could bear it no longer. He had denied Himself for the will/sake of His Father, and He was now paying the ultimate price at the hands of His enemies. But He was also setting the example for us.

1. The Cross of Self-Denial

A. Mt 16:24-26 – The standard of self denial stands at odds with our self-indulgent society. The whole nature of the cross and those whom Jesus calls to be disciples is that of putting **God first**.

1. Peter had tempted Jesus to put Himself first (Mt 16:22). This is Satan's tactic.
2. Jesus taught that the kingdom must come first and God will supply the rest – Mt 6:33.

B. Maybe our greatest challenge: to give God freely and cheerfully of our *time*:

1. Christians are often just *too busy* to be involved with their brethren, teaching non-Christians, going to meetings, **intensive** Bible study, etc.
2. This is *deceptive worldliness*. Our televisions, ball games, computers, etc. all seem to eat up our time so that there is little left for the really important things in life.

C. Jesus and Paul both exemplify single-mindedness and priority – Gal 6:14 (“the world has been crucified to me ...”).

1. Such focus enabled Paul and Jesus to have great influence for the kingdom. ***How significant is your influence?***
2. Are you still struggling with commitment? Have you truly put the world out of your heart and are you *completely* devoted to Christ and His cross?

2. The Cross of Persecution

A. Mt 10:34-39, also v 21 – This speaks of *consequences*, not intent. Americans are conditioned to the “good life”; the gospel of “health and wealth” flourishes.

1. There is, and always will be, antagonism between good and evil – 2 Tim 3:12. As one author noted, “When the right goes forth into a world of wrong, there must be war” (Boles). The very idea of “taking up a cross” implies suffering at the hands of others.
2. This antagonism crosses family lines (cf. Moses – Heb 11:24-26).

B. Areas of antagonism:

1. True worshipers persecuted by false worshipers.

- a. Began with Cain and Abel. Cain was “of the wicked one” but still felt the need to worship – 1 Jn 3:12-13. His rejection fueled envy and hatred.
- b. Many Jewish converts clung to circumcision to avoid “persecution for the cross of Christ” (Gal 6:12; 5:11).
- c. If we are committed to the cross, we are committed to the truth it represents. Just before going to the cross, Jesus said, “*Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice*” (Jn 18:37). Others will see this conviction as “judging them.” We must not compromise truth to blunt the offense of the cross.

2. Between true worshipers and unbelievers.

- a. Our society is increasingly hostile toward the Bible and any moral standard which is based on it. Christians are becoming more marginalized, out of the mainstream of values and principles.
- b. Peter, as one who had caved in to social pressure and denied the Lord, gives some sound guidance – 1 Pet 3:13-17; 4:1-4, 12-16.
- c. We must have the courage to be different, misunderstood, misrepresented, for the world will revile, slander, lie and ridicule us.

3. Bearing Our Cross for Glory

- A. Heb 12:1-2 – Jesus endured the cross because He was able to see *beyond* it.
- B. Rom 8:18 – Our present sufferings and sacrifices cannot compare to the glory will be ours.
- C. Be proud to be a Christian. The world doesn’t offer any better answers, solutions, philosophies. Be confident in what the Bible teaches, in God who speaks through His word, in the promises of eternal life which will be ours if we bear our cross.

Conclusion:

- 1. The cross is the focal point of human history and the fulcrum of our lives. It is representative of the character of God and the character He expects us to have.
- 2. Let us have daily appreciation for the cross: freedom from our past and hope for the future.