

Bearing His Cross

Luke 14:27



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FOCAL Read Together Luke 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Whosoever. This is one of the greatest words in the Scripture. **Whosoever.** This word is frequently repeated throughout the Lord's *Sermon on the Mount*, often in a negative way. Jesus said **whosoever breaks one of the smallest of my commandments, and teaches others to do the same, that person shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:19).** “Whosoever” is a word that shows that humans – both believing and unbelieving – can make good and bad choices. God has left to us our freedom – this is true of all. You can choose or reject Christ as Savior. **Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).** **Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.** You have a choice. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, but believe Him not and be condemned. **Whosoever.**

But the **whosoever** of Scripture does not only apply to those who want to be saved, but it also applies to the deeper Christian life. In our text above Jesus says **whosoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.** The Christian is not saved just so he can go to heaven and avoid hell. The Christian is saved so that he or she can **be a disciple of Christ.** To learn of Him. To make a positive impact on the world around us. To be a person of purpose, of God's purpose.

Some people take the above text and apply it to personal

illness or trial. I myself have misused the text that way. Having degenerative arthritis I have often gotten up in the morning and said **“I must bear my cross and follow Him”**. The cross that Christ speaks of has absolutely nothing to do with illness and corruption. We have illness and corruption in this life because our forefather Adam made a bad choice, bringing **“sin into the world and death by sin” (Romans 5:12)**. Your illness, whether it be cancer, arthritis, Alzheimer's, or even a common cold or influenza, has nothing to do with choice. I did not choose to have degenerative arthritis, but I have it because of corruption that works in me. Listen Beloved,

The Cross is not thrust upon us, nor is it an unnatural result of Adam's sin. The Cross is a choice made. The Cross is a selfless act of one so that another might be blessed.

When Jesus said **pick up your cross and follow Me** He did not mean to buck up under your illness. The Cross was not thrust upon Christ, but it was a choice that He made for our benefit. Jesus prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane that, **“if it be possible, dear Father, let this cup – the Cross – pass from Me”**. Yet Jesus each time ended His prayer with **“nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done, O Father” (Mark 26:39)**. God the Father gave the Son an opportunity to step outside of His comfort zone so that **“whosoever will”** could be saved. Christ was not forced to the Cross, nor was the Cross about His own personal suffering. The Cross goes beyond that. As **G. Campbell Morgan** once

said:

“The cross had one meaning and one meaning only. The cross is always personal, self emptying, in order to effect the serving and saving of others. You and I know nothing of the cross so long as our suffering is merely personal. our personal sorrows do not constitute the cross, unless our sorrow is the result of a self emptying in order that others might be served and someone else may be saved.”¹

Jesus Christ had to **empty Himself**. Though He is eternal God He **made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)**. He did this not because it was thrust upon Him, but because He wanted to raise fallen man from the dust of sin, to make it possible that **whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life**.

I have read with interest – and concern – in several Christian publications how the Church is losing its influence in America. Young people are leaving the Church at an astounding rate. Many between the ages of 18-22 years old are leaving the Church never to return again. Why? We are quick to blame this loss of impact on the world in which we live. We are quick to blame the media, the newspapers, magazines, movies, and television. Yet Jesus promised us in another place that if **He was lifted up from the earth, He would draw all**

¹ In his sermon *Disciples for Building and Battle*

men unto Himself (John 12:32). If Jesus has promised this them it is true. The reason that we are not reaching America is because **we are not lifting up Jesus.** The reason that we are not reaching our world is because **we are not bearing our Cross and following Him.** The world is watching and, in many cases, is seeing representatives of Adam and not representatives of Christ. How can we change this perception and win the world for Jesus?

We must pick up our Cross and follow Him. We must, every believer in Christ, step outside of our comfort zone and we willing to suffer to show the love of God to others. The context of our focal verse lays out what God expects of His disciples. Let's see what Jesus has to say.

1. Picking Up My Cross Means Putting Away My Misplaced Pride

CONTEXT Luke 14:1-4 **And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. {2} And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy². {3} And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, **Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?** {4} **And they held their peace. And he took [him], and healed him, and let him go;****

Jesus had been invited to the house of one of the **chief**

2 G5203, ὑδρωπικός, hudrōpikos, *hoo-dro-pik-os'*, From a compound of G5204 and a derivative of G3700 (as if *looking watery*); to be "dropsical": - have the dropsy.

Pharisees one Saturday to eat. We know it was a Saturday because it was a **sabbath day**, a Jewish day of rest. God instituted the Sabbath – a day to rest and worship Him – as far back as the Garden of Eden. The Lord wants you to take at least one day to focus on Him, to worship Him, to love Him in Church or in Synagogue. But the Sabbath was made *for our benefit*. Jesus said in another place:

Mark 2:27 ... The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

God instituted a sabbath for His people because He loves us. He wants us to rest, to have times where we relax and rest in His care. **The sabbath was made for man.**

Misplaced pride often reveals itself in godless and non-Biblical traditions. The Pharisees took the sabbath of God and, by adding their own prideful traditions to it, they changed the sabbath into a terrible yoke that throttled all of Israel.

Nothing could be done on the sabbath – though the Pharisees would allow you to get your ox out of the ditch. **The Pharisees, like the organization PETA³ today, treated animals better than they treated humans.** How pitiful when the people who should represent God forget their purpose. How pitiful the Pharisees were!

3 People For The Ethical Treatment of Animals, a liberal and non Bible based "animal rights" cult.

As Jesus prepares to eat with these Pharisees there comes a knock at the door. There stands a man with **the dropsy** – which in modern terms would be **someone with congestive heart failure**. This man was swollen up, **bloated with water**, and badly in need of treatment. The Pharisees watch Jesus – will He do anything to heal this man? After all, this is the sabbath. Then Jesus asks:

CONTEXT Luke 14:3 ... **Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?**

“**Is it lawful?**” Jesus asks, “what does *God's Law*” say? You cannot pick up your cross unless you first pick up God's Word and see what is written in His Book.

What has He Who is eternal gone on record to say about healing on the sabbath? **The Pharisees held their peace**. Everyone knows that God heals on the sabbath. If you have a cut on your hand on Friday, and you bandage it, your body – fearfully and wonderfully made by God - continues to heal itself even on the sabbath day. God *never* said that a person could not be healed on the sabbath – and the Pharisees knew that. They kept their mouths shut as Jesus did what was right.

The man with congestive heart failure was healed.

Taking up the cross means to *step outside of your comfort zone with Jesus* and be willing to suffer to bring the blessing of God to another. Jesus was willing to go against the Pharisees and their traditions in order to heal

this one poor man. But Jesus went even farther. He came to the heart of the matter, defining *why* these religious leaders were unable to present the policies of God to a lost and dying world.

The cross carried is a prideless thing and a self emptying thing. The cross is a thing that the self righteous and the lost will *never* endure.

Jesus told them:

CONTEXT Luke 14:8-11 **When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room ... BUT ... go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. {11} For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**

The Pharisees always chose the higher seat, the place of honor, the well known and foremost table. This is always the case with that evil thing we call *pride*. Pride says “life is about me”. But God says “If you will be My disciple, you must be like Me. The *evil pride* must go. You must humble yourself just as I did when I walked this earth. You must hold all things – particularly your pride – with a very loose hand. Put away anything that exalts you, and cling to that which exalts Me.” What honor did Jesus have in this life?

Luke 9:58 ... Foxes have holes, and birds of the air

have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

No honor at all! Jesus always took the lowest place for our sake, and bids us to do the same. Jesus spent His earthly life reaching out to the *undesirable crowd*. He did as He preached:

CONTEXT Luke 14:12-14 ... **When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. {13} But ... call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: {14} And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.**

ILLUSTRATE Do not invite the best people, but step outside your comfort zone and *invite those in need who cannot pay you* to your fine feasts. Invite that person on the street corner to Church because Jesus would have done so. The only whole person in a healthy Church is Jesus Christ. He is the Rock of our salvation, but we are but broken stone. Yet God uses broken stone to build His Kingdom. Jesus died on the cross for the broken, the lame, the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lost. He died for **whosoever will**.

The lost have value, for Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. No one ever loses a piece of garage and then goes looking for it. It is lost because it has value.

The lost have value to God, and the cross proves that value! Realize this, dear ones. Pick up your cross – and put down your pride.

2. Picking Up My Cross Means Being Always Available To God

CONTEXT Luke 14:7 And he put forth a parable...

CONTEXT Luke 14:16-18 ... **A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: {17} And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. {18} And they all with one consent began to make excuse ...**

FOCAL Luke 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Jesus next tells us about three people who, when they were invited to a great feast, made excuses rather than going to the feast. These people all made excuses as to why they couldn't come. One man said:

CONTEXT Luke 14:18 ... **I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.**

Do you really believe that this person spent money on a plot of land – and *never* looked at it? Absolutely not. I don't know what land prices were back then, but no one ever sells it a penny an acre. Land has value – this was an obvious excuse. Look at the next excuse:

CONTEXT Luke 14:19 ... **I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.**

Again, would anyone have bought five oxen without first seeing them in action? Only a fool would do that! Yet this man said “I need to see if my investment will pay off”. How foolish an excuse. The last excuse, however:

CONTEXT Luke 14:20 ... **I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.**

is totally off the wall. The Mosaic Law prevented drafting a man into the military in his first year of marriage. That's a good policy, I think. But what does marrying a wife have to do with avoiding a **great supper**. If it was a **great supper** he could have brought his wife with him. As a pastor I hear this excuse quite frequently. “I don't have time to come to Church. After all, I'm married, and I need to spend that time with my wife and kids”.

Bring them with you!

Each reason given was a foolish excuse. What did the rich man do? He told his servant:

CONTEXT Luke 14:21, 23 ... **Go out quickly ... bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. {23} ... Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.**

When we become *unavailable* to God He will turn His attention to those who are available – and bless them with the blessing that you yourself should have received.

ILLUSTRATE God blesses those who are available, those who do not make lame excuses rather than serve Him. God blessed a general named **Gideon**, who prepared to do battle against the **Midianites**. The Midianites were a people who loved to attack from secret places, ambushing their enemies. Gideon's army was large – some 32,000 men – but the Lord wanted to use those who would be available. The Lord told Gideon, **“Whosoever is fearful and afraid, send them home”** (there's that “whosoever” again). 22,000 men headed home – their fear made them unavailable. Then God said **“send the men down to the water to drink”**. 9, 700 men fell to their knees and, focused on the water, began to drink. **They were unavailable because they let personal comfort come between them and their cross.** Yet 300 men drank while keeping their eyes on the horizon, ever mindful of their mission. Do you realize that 300 of 32,000 is less than 1% of the original number of warriors? God uses the available to do mighty things for Him. God blesses the available, whereas those who are selfish, those who will not pick up their cross and follow Him, lose the greatest of blessings.

What does *being available* to Jesus mean? Look at our focal verse in context:

CONTEXT Luke 14:26-27 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. {27} And **whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.**

Does Jesus expect you to despise your children, your close family, *yourself*? No, that's not what He's saying. But you must always put Him first. Not your wife, not your husband, not your siblings, not your children – **but Jesus must be first.** Why? Because

The Bible teaches those who are Christ's disciples that we are disciples for **building** and we are disciples for **battle**.

Look at the Scripture. God begins the Scripture by **building**. He builds a perfect place, a Garden called Eden, and puts man in that Garden. What happens next but **battle**. Satan comes into the Garden to destroy that which God has made, to cause a rift between God and man through our own disobedience. Adam should have been focused on God, but – like 31,700 of Gideon's troops – put his focus on the wrong ally.

The cross is about building and battle. Jesus emphasizes this next. He says:

CONTEXT Luke 14:28-30 For **which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish**

it? {29} Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, {30} Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Jesus is building a kingdom, and wants us to **count the cost** of discipleship. Count the cost of failure in discipleship. Our public schools now have metal detectors at the doors rather than the Ten Commandments on the walls. Our children are given sex education often as early as in the second grade, but are forbidden to speak the name of Jesus. Our televisions and media glorify sex and violence. Churches promote racism and separatism, and many have become places where the Scripture is no longer preached.

Jesus wants disciples who will stop making excuses, and who will stand by His side no matter what. He wants disciples who will **count the cost** of failure, and look beyond the *now* and into eternity. Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18 ... upon this rock I will build my church [BUILDING]; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [BATTLE].

We who are disciples of Christ are building a kingdom for Jesus, but we must never forget that our enemy – Satan – is every bit as sneaky as the Midianites were. We are not left on this earth to pipe, sing, and entertain ourselves. We are building – and we must bear the cross.

CONTEXT Luke 14:31 **Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and**

consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

We are battling – not with one another – but with **forces of darkness**. The cross we bear is not personal physical suffering, not mental anguish, but it is **personal, self emptying, in order to effect the serving and saving of others.**

I encourage those of you who are Christ's disciples to pick up the cross – YOUR cross – and follow Him! If we do not, then America will be lost. Yet Beloved, we will take America, and bring revival to this nation, if we will obediently take up our cross and follow Him. The Bible begins with a God building a garden. The Bible ends with a glorious city of God. Our God reigns, and will help us, if we who are saved by faith do our part. **Pick up your cross and follow Him.**

ILLUSTRATE Someone sent me this true account of a nine year old Christian boy named Austin who was willing to pick up his cross and follow Jesus⁴. His mother wrote:

“Last fall my 9-year-old son Austin had his tonsils removed. Before the surgery, Austin's anesthesiologist came to start an IV. But when the doctor started to leave, Austin called, “Hey, wait.” The doctor turned. “Yeah, buddy, what do you need?”. Austin asked, “Do you go to church?” When

the doctor said no, Austin asked “Well, are you saved?” Chuckling nervously, the doctor said, “No, but after talking to you, maybe it's something I should consider.” Austin said, “You should, because Jesus is great!” The doctor quickly made his exit. When the doctor got ready to put the anesthesia mask on Austin the young boy asked to pray first. The boy prayed “Dear Lord, please let all the doctors and nurses have a good day. And Jesus, please let the doctor get saved and start going to church. Amen.”

I am told that this doctor later received Christ as his Lord and Savior because of the seed that Austin planted. God can do great things with those who are willing to step outside their comfort zone, pick up their cross, and follow Jesus. May God touch your hearts with His Word.

4 From Tina Blessit