

TAKE UP YOUR BED AND FOLLOW HIM

Joh 5:8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

It is important to interpret the scriptures by context, to whom they were written, and what covenant they are under. When we do this we often will come into direct conflict with tradition and sacred cows. This is the case with the admonition given in manifold churches today that Christians are to pick up their crosses and follow the Lord. We find this admonition from our Savior only in the first three gospels- Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is interestingly missing in the gospel of John. Matthew was written to the Jews, Mark to the Romans, and Luke to the Gentile world. John is unique in that it is written to believers. It is also interesting to note that Paul, the man given the revelation of the grace of God and the mysteries of the church, did not mention one single time Christians were to take up their cross and follow Jesus. Let's look at the setting of Jesus' admonitions to pick up the cross and follow Him and then contrast that with the Christian's call to follow Him.

Mat 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Mat 16:22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

Mat 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.**"

Mat 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "**If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.**"

Mar 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mar 8:32 He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

Mar 8:33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Mar 8:34 When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Mar 10:17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Mar 10:18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, *that is*, God.

Mar 10:19 You know the commandments: 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,' 'DO NOT MURDER,' 'DO NOT STEAL,' 'DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS,' 'Do not defraud,' 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.'"

Mar 10:20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

Mar 10:21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

Luk 9:20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

Luk 9:21 And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one,

Luk 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

Luk 9:23 Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

In each case in which Jesus admonishes to take up the cross and follow Him he is speaking to those who are legalistic and filled with self-will, self-strength, and pride. In three of the instances [including in Luke- Peter's rebuke of Jesus is not mentioned- it is the same event however recorded in Matthew and Mark] Jesus is responding to Peter's prideful and self-willed stance against Jesus mission to die on the cross. Peter always struggled with legalism before he was saved and even after as we see in the book of

Galatians chapter 2. He was filled with himself and what he could do for the Lord. He declared the night Jesus was to be betrayed that He would deliver the Savior from death. He did not realize that the Lord's death for him would deliver him! In these passages Peter is resisting Jesus' death for him. He was prideful in the fact that he would stand up and deliver the Savior! Instead of realizing that he could not do what the Lord was telling him, he continued in his pride. Peter, when Jesus was taken in the garden, could not fulfill the call of Jesus to take up the cross and follow Him. Instead of being implicated with Jesus and possibly be crucified himself, he denied the Lord! When Jesus was on the cross Peter was not there. The only disciple that was present at the cross was the disciple who had rested his head upon Jesus' bosom. John was the only disciple there. The other disciples could not take up their cross and follow Him. They could not find it in themselves to do it. John was there because he rested upon Jesus and was empowered to come to the cross.

Jesus also used this same metaphor in addressing the rich young ruler. He came to Jesus asking what he had to do to inherit eternal life. He contradicted himself by his question. We inherit by birth not by works we do. Jesus gave him the Law with both barrels! The young man blinded by pride could not see his sin and his corrupt state even still. Jesus then revealed this man's sin and inability before God in telling him to sell all that you have, take up the cross, and follow me. The young man walked away because he realized he could not do this. Jesus used this metaphor to reveal to those who were filled with self that they were unable to do what God requested. Unsaved man could not die to themselves! Matter of fact it is impossible to commit suicide by the way of the cross! You may get one nail in yourself, but I would like to see you drive in the other two! Jesus did not crucify himself! It was done to Him! This is what Jesus was driving at. What is impossible for man, God can do! Jesus went to the cross as mankind's covenant representative. He bore all of us to the cross and crucified us! He did for us what we could not do for ourselves! Instead of being told to crucify ourselves in the epistles we are told time and again we HAVE BEEN crucified. It is an accomplished fact. As Christians we are called to rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and walk in the power of His resurrection.

Php 3:9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

We see something very interesting in the book of Philippians. Paul talks about his former life in religion and all that he had gained. He said that he had to trade all the things he personally had gained and done [his righteousness under the Law] for the righteousness of God that came by faith in the finished work of Christ. He said he had to do this in order to know Christ. However, in knowing Christ Paul mentions that he wanted to first know Christ's resurrection power and **then his sufferings and death**. Religion teaches that we must deny our self, suffer, and then ultimately die to ourselves to experience the power and blessings of God. Paul however reversed it. The divine order for a Christian is to first experience the gift of power of the resurrection life of Christ then this will empower them to deny the flesh and see the mortification of the deeds of the body through the Spirit. What an unsaved person can't do, the Spirit of Christ enables a Christian to do. Only when you place your entire reliance upon the finished work of Christ [our co-crucifixion, burial, and rising with Christ], will the Spirit then work in you to help you to deny the flesh and put to death the works of the flesh in your life.

When we walk in faith in our crucifixion with Christ, the Spirit will put to death the deeds of the body. [Romans 8:13] We find in the gospel of John the believers call to follow Jesus.

Joh 5:5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

Joh 5:6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, "**Do you want to be made well?**"

Joh 5:7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Joh 5:8 Jesus said to him, "**Rise, take up your bed and walk.**"

Joh 5:9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

John reveals to believers how we are to follow the Lord. Jesus came across a man that was incapacitated. He was in this state for a long time. He could not walk and he could not make himself well. He knew he needed

a man to help him. Jesus came to this man and said to him, rise, take up your bed and walk. In this short sentence is found the secret of the Christian life. We must realize that apart from God we can do nothing [John 15:5] Without Christ we all are invalids spiritually speaking. We cannot deny ourselves in our own strength. We cannot walk before the Lord without His empowering words- rise, pick up your bed, and walk. It is vital to see that Jesus did not say to the man, "rise and walk". He told the man to "rise, pick up and carry his bed, and walk". He was to carry his bed with him. You would think that the man would just leave his bed and walk away, but Jesus told him to carry his bed with him. This is significant. This man was healed on the Sabbath, which is the day of rest. This reveals that we are saved and empowered to walk by resting in the Lord. What does this speak to you, believer? We are to walk from our continual rest in what Jesus has done for us and what He has commanded over our lives! Instead of carrying the cross and trying to die to ourselves by our will power, we are to carry our bed and rest in His work for us on the cross. From this rest will come a powerful walk in the Spirit! As you rest your faith in Jesus' shed blood and in his death and resurrection you now can rise in His resurrection power and walk. Once Peter learned this lesson he was able to deny himself by the power of the Spirit of Christ and history records he was crucified upside down for the glory of God in Rome. What Peter could not do in his own power, he was able to do as carried his bed and walked after the Lord in resting faith. It is time to rise, carry your bed, and walk in the power of the Lord!