

The Conditions of Discipleship

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A sermon outline of Rev. James R. Reynolds, Sr.

Text:

Matthew 16:24 -- Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

INTRODUCTION

The conditions of discipleship are not easy. It is going to cost you to be the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Often in the preaching of the Gospel the conditions of discipleship are neglected. The Gospel is presented in such a way the hearer must only name the name of Christ and they are assured that they are all set. The fact remains not only is there more required of us as His disciples but no leader throughout history has ever proposed such things for his followers. And He requires them to be done willingly--"If any man will."

Following Christ implies three things:

Imitating Christ

John 13:15 -- For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you

Having the Feelings of Christ

Matthew 9:36 -- But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Lamentations 1:12 -- Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?...

If you pass by knowing a soul is lost and you have the answer, is it nothing to you?

Obeying Christ

Matthew 7:21 -- Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Self Denial

Christ himself set down self-denial as a condition for discipleship.

Luke 14:33 -- So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

We can have nothing between Him and us.

Mark 10:28 -- Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

Self is the root, the tree and the branches of all the evil of our fallen nature. We are so quick to say we gave it all to Christ, but like Peter there is often much we have not denied. Until man denies self, he will deny God.

Obedience to Christ's Words is an important part of self-denial.

Our self-denial must also be out of love.

John 14:21 -- He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Christ was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). How can we continually desire pleasure?

Difficult

The duty of self-denial is not easy but is like rowing against the tide. There will be a struggle against the violent emotions of our affections and will.

Titus 2:12 -- Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Self-indulgence shows that we lack genuine interest in God and His Word.

What we deny is nothing compared with what we get.

Cross Bearing

Matthew 10:38 -- And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Self-denial for Christ leads to bearing our cross.

It is our cross that we must bear and not another.

Galatians 5:24 -- And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Alfred H. Ackley wrote:

(chorus) Take up thy cross and follow Me, I hear the blessed Savior call; How can I make a lesser sacrifice, When Jesus gave His all.

(verse 1) I walked one day along a country road, And there a stranger journeyed, too, Bent low beneath the burden of His load: It was a cross, a cross I knew.

(verse 3) Oh, let me bear Thy cross, dear Lord," I cried, And, lo, a cross for me appeared, The one, forgotten, I had cast aside, The one, so long, that I had feared.

Christ Gave Us the Example

Matthew 10:38 -- And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Salvation is a free gift, but as His disciples there are requirements.

John 13:15 -- For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you

When you see someone having a hard time, do not add to their burden. Christ was always reaching out and is still reaching out today to those who are under a burden. Christ gave us the example we are to follow.

I Timothy 4:12 -- Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

It is a much stricter rule to follow in order to be an example to believers than it is to be an example to the sinner.

I Peter 2:21 -- For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Revelation 14:4 -- ...These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth...

CONCLUSION

Lord, give us the vision and compassion that Christ has for the lost.

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