

“THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP”

PART

(CROSS BEARING)

BIBLE STUDY: UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD HAS AN EXPECTATION OF OUR LIVES TO ACCEPT HIS WILL OF SELF SACRIFICE TO FOLLOW HIM.

OBJECTIVE: STUDY AND EXAMINE WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF YOU TO WALK IN TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

KEY SCRIPTURES: LUKE 9:23-24 / MARK 8:34-38 /

MATTHEW 19:28-29 /

MARK 8: 34-35 "THEN JESUS CALLED THE CROWD TO HIM ALONG WITH HIS DISCIPLES & SAID: 'IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, HE MUST DENY HIMSELF & TAKE UP HIS CROSS & FOLLOW ME. FOR WHOEVER WANTS TO SAVE HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, BUT WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE FOR ME & FOR THE GOSPEL WILL SAVE IT.'"

WHEN JESUS TALKS ABOUT US DENYING OURSELVES, & TAKING UP A CROSS & FOLLOWING HIM – WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHAT IS CROSS BEARING?

IT SIMPLY MEANS LIVING A LIFE OF SELF DENIAL TO FULFILL A LIFE IN DISCIPLESHIP FOLLOWING JESUS.

I BELIEVE THAT WE OUGHT TO REALIZE TWO THINGS ABOUT JESUS AS WE LEARN TO BEAR OUR CROSS.

FIRST OF ALL, JESUS NEVER TRIES TO BRIBE US BY THE OFFER OF AN EASY LIFE.

NOWHERE IN GOD’S WORD DO WE READ HOW JESUS TRIES TO BUY YOUR DECISION BY OFFERING ELABORATE THINGS. JESUS NEVER SOUGHT TO LURE PEOPLE TO HIM BY THE OFFER OF AN

EASY WAY. HE CAME NOT TO MAKE LIFE EASY, BUT TO MAKE PEOPLE GREAT.

SECONDLY, JESUS NEVER CALLS UPON US TO DO ANYTHING THAT HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO DO HIMSELF. WHAT HE ASKS US TO FACE, HE HAS ALREADY FACED. AND WHEN HE CALLS UPON US TO TAKE UP A CROSS, HE, HIMSELF, HAS ALREADY BORNE ONE FOR US. THAT GOES AGAINST THE GRAIN OF WHAT THE WORLD TEACHES, FOR THE WORLD TEACHES THAT SUCCESS IS MEASURED BY HOW MUCH WEALTH WE HOLD, BY HOW CONVENIENT & EASY OUR LIVES ARE. AND ANYTHING THAT BOTHERS US OR BECOMES DIFFICULT, WE SHOULD AVOID.

SADLY, SOME CHURCHES SEEM TO HAVE ADOPTED THAT ATTITUDE.

SOME CHURCHES ARE ADVERTISED AS PLACES OFFERING ALL KINDS OF FRINGE BENEFITS TO THEIR MEMBERS.

AND MANY PEOPLE GO SHOPPING FOR THE CHURCH THAT SEEMS TO OFFER THEM THE MOST.

THAT'S THE WAY THE WORLD HAS CONDITIONED US TO THINK - EVERYBODY OUGHT TO CATER TO US, & ALL OUR WANTS & DESIRES OUGHT TO BE MET. AND WHEN THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN, WE BECOME UNHAPPY.

AND YET, THE WORDS OF JESUS ARE STILL THERE, "IF ANYONE WOULD COME AFTER ME, HE MUST DENY HIMSELF & TAKE UP HIS CROSS & FOLLOW ME."

WHAT DID HE MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "TAKE UP" OR "BEAR A CROSS"? WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN SOMEONE SAYS, "I WANT TO TAKE UP MY CROSS & FOLLOW JESUS?" WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT "CROSS-BEARING?"

I. CROSS-BEARING IS ALWAYS VOLUNTARY

FIRST OF ALL, THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT "TAKING UP A CROSS" IS VOLUNTARY. JESUS CALLS US, & CHALLENGES US, BUT IT IS OUR

DECISION. TAKING UP A CROSS & FOLLOWING JESUS IS VOLUNTARY.

I'M AFRAID THAT GENERALLY WE'RE PRETTY CARELESS IN THE WAY WE TALK ABOUT OUR "CROSS-BEARING."

FOR EXAMPLE, SUPPOSE THAT AFTER EXTENSIVE TESTING THE DOCTOR TELLS ME, "I'M SORRY, BUT YOU HAVE DIABETES, & YOU'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH IT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE." NOW THAT MAY BE A BURDEN THAT I MUST BEAR, BUT IT IS NOT A CROSS I HAVE TAKEN UP FOR JESUS. SO I CAN'T THEN TELL OTHERS, "WELL, THAT'S MY CROSS TO BEAR," BECAUSE I DIDN'T VOLUNTEER FOR IT.

OR IF I LOSE A LOVED ONE AND SUFFER GRIEF, THAT IS NOT A CROSS. IT MAY BE A HEAVY BURDEN, BUT IT IS NOT A CROSS THAT I AM BEARING FOR JESUS. YOU SEE, IF I TALK ABOUT BEARING A CROSS, THAT MEANS I AM VOLUNTARILY TAKING IT UP FOR JESUS. I'M GOING TO ENLIST, TO OFFER MYSELF IN SOME WAY TO SERVE JESUS.

II. CROSS-BEARING IS AN ACT OF LOVE

SO, CROSS-BEARING IS NOT AN ACCIDENT THAT HAPPENS TO US, OR SOMETHING UNAVOIDABLE THAT WE MUST FACE. CROSS-BEARING IS AN ACT OF LOVE THAT WE FREELY CHOOSE. IT IS A TASK THAT WE UNDERTAKE, A PRICE THAT WE PAY, OUT OF LOVE.

FOR JESUS IT MEANT GOING TO A CROSS TO DIE BECAUSE HE LOVED US SO MUCH HE COULD DO NOTHING ELSE.

IT MEANS REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE WHO ARE UNLOVED AND WHO MAY NEVER RETURN THE LOVE. AND YET WE ARE TO KEEP ON LOVING BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT JESUS DID.

IT MEANS NOT JUST LOVING PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU BACK. I LOVE MY WIFE & SHE LOVES ME BACK. SHE UNDERSTANDS ME AND PUTS UP WITH MY BAD HABITS, NOT THAT I HAVE ANY, AND

FOR SOME REASON SHE KEEPS ON LOVING ME. I LOVE MY CHILDREN & THEY LOVE ME BACK, TOO.

BUT IT IS HARD TO LOVE PEOPLE WHO DON'T LOVE YOU BACK. IT'S HARD TO LOVE PEOPLE WHO HATE US. AND YET CROSS-BEARING MEANS JUST THAT.

A PERFECT DESCRIPTION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BEAR A CROSS CAN BE FOUND IN:

I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

LISTEN AS I BEGIN READING IN VS. 4, & I WANT TO CHANGE THE WORD "LOVE" & PUT THE WORD "CROSS-BEARER" IN ITS PLACE.

"A CROSS-BEARER IS PATIENT. A CROSS-BEARER IS KIND. A CROSS-BEARER DOES NOT ENVY. A CROSS-BEARER DOES NOT BOAST. A CROSS-BEARER IS NOT ARROGANT OR RUDE. A CROSS-BEARER IS NOT SELF-SEEKING. A CROSS-BEARER IS NOT EASILY ANGERED, NOR KEEPS RECORDS OF WRONGS. HE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL, BUT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH. A CROSS-BEARER ALWAYS PROTECTS, ALWAYS TRUSTS, ALWAYS HOPES, ALWAYS PERSEVERES."

THAT IS WHAT CROSS-BEARING MEANS. IT MEANS TAKING THE LOVE OF GOD TO THE VERY ENDS OF THE WORLD. TO TOUCH THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO ARE UNLOVABLE. IT MEANS DENYING & SACRIFICING.

IT MEANS PAYING THE PRICE REGARDLESS OF THE HARDSHIPS WE MUST ENDURE.