



(April 24, 2013)

## **TAKE UP MY CROSS**

You are faced with a decision. You are having a Cross experience. Your body is the stake; the choice you must make is the Cross. God's will is on the right side of the Cross; your will is on the left side of the Cross. The fire that tries man's soul burns beneath you. Your spirit reaches with one hand and grabs God's will. Your soul reaches with the other hand and grabs your will. As you hang above the fire, you find yourself having a hard time holding onto both ends. Your muscles begin to burn from the pain. The suffering begins. You are not willing to let go with either hand, so the pain intensifies. How do you make it stop? You release the grip of one hand.

You choose to hold onto your will. God's will is still there attached to the Cross. Wait. What else do you see? There is a slide that goes down into the flames. You get on and travel to the bottom. The fire begins to consume you. Your flesh begins to burn. The pain increases. You can stand it no longer. You must escape this suffering. You search and search, but there is no way out. You look up. You see a rope. You grab hold and climb back onto the Cross seeking some relief from your circumstances. You continue to do this, time and time again, thinking, sooner or later you will find the path out. It never happens. Each time, your strength fades. One day, you decide you must make a different choice.

You are back on the Cross. You let go of your will to choose God's will. Your will falls to the ground and is consumed in the flames. You realize you had to sacrifice it to God in exchange for His will. All of a sudden a ladder appears before you. You place your hands and feet on the ladder. You climb higher and higher, further and further away from the flames.

When you reach the top, you find rest with the Lord. He tells you to look down. He shows you others on their Cross. He has you watch as they go from the Cross to the flames and back again. As you watch, your heart begins to burn with compassion. You hurt for them, because you understand what they are going through. You cry out to the Lord, "Help them, Jesus! They are suffering so. It hurts. I know. I was there. Please, Jesus. Help them." He looks to you and tells you, "That is what I commissioned you to do." "I understand now, Lord."

So, what does it mean to take up our Cross and follow Christ? It means understanding the purpose of our Cross experience is to get rid of what is in us that hinders our relationship with God. That is our sacrifice. But, the experience does not end there. It is not just for us. It is also for others. Jesus did not go to the Cross for Himself. He went so we could be reconciled to our heavenly Father. We should not go to our Cross for ourselves. Our purpose should be reconciliation! That is our gift - helping others to reconcile their relationship with Jesus. Ultimately, it cannot be about what we can get, but about what we can give. And, we cannot give a gift worthy of our Father until we have taken up our Cross to follow Christ.

What choice will you make today?

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This was originally the heart of an essay done for a class at Biblical Life College and Seminary. It was turned into a personal experience for Women of Worship, Women of Witness Bible Study in our April 24, 2013 Meeting.