

"Take Up Your Cross"

Mark 8:34-38

- Denial of self is a radical concept for any individual - any society
- We often find ourselves struggling with it today
- But it is one of the keys to successful Christian discipleship

- What does self-denial mean for believers in Jesus?
- Why does it come up so often in the New Testament?
- And what is Jesus trying to teach us about it at the end of Mark 8?

- Today's theme: "Take Up Your Cross"

Mark 8:34

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

- Jesus is speaking to a group of people, some of them are His disciples
- Disciples are those who have placed their faith and trust in Him
- Those who have committed their lives to following Him

- Anyone making this commitment - or anyone considering it
- Should know that it will mean self-denial
- It will mean taking on whatever responsibilities He requires
- And obeying His commands, no matter the cost

- It will mean constant battle with our own flesh
- Walking in His steps, reliant upon His strength

- Whatever burdens the Christian life presents
- We must take them up
- We must face them with righteous character and a joyful disposition
- Ever in careful submission to our Savior

- This is the mandate for everyone that follows Jesus

Mark 8:35

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

- A person that sets aside his life for his own purposes
- That uses his intelligence, his personal gifts, his energy, and his time for himself
- Who obeys his own desires
- Will soon discover that his life has been lost to selfishness

- Instead of fulfillment
- He finds emptiness
- The fear that handing our lives over to God will cost us our fulfillment is a lie
- The only way to abundant life is through total surrender
- Instead of saving our life, we must give it up
- It must be His to fully control
- The world, the flesh, and the devil will constantly and adamantly deny this notion
- They will insist we maintain control
- But this is a trap
- We must instead release control to Him

Mark 8:36-37

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

- What if a person professes discipleship, but refuses self-denial?
- Instead of following Christ in obedience, sets out to gain worldly things for themselves?
- Some of the people in Christ's audience may have been in this very position
- But this is not Christian discipleship
- It is a counterfeit
- And even if this kind of person were to gain the worldly things they desire, it would be for nothing - useless
- All the riches, all the notoriety, all the comfort, and all the power in the whole world are nothing to the man who faces an eternity of judgement in Hell
- If we were to "save our lives" for ourselves
- Of what lasting value would they be?
- For they are but a vapor, that appears for a little time, then vanishes away
- What is done for Christ, however, will last
- As Matthew 16:19-21 tell us...

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

- And so we must treasure that which God treasures
- And work for that which God tells us to work

Mark 8:38

38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

- There is no shame in the acceptance of Jesus Christ and His word
- In full and total surrender to His Lordship
- Because He is sovereign over all creation
- And it only makes sense for us to follow with our whole heart
- For each of us must stand before Him one day

- How, then, are we doing at denying self?
- At taking up our cross?
- At obeying His commands no matter the cost?

- Are we saving our lives for our own purposes?
- Or are we losing our lives for His sake?

- Remember, this is the mandate of discipleship

Jesus said "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

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