

**SO, ARE YOU A CARRIER?**

Christ Jesus lays it all on the line in Luke 9:23-27. He declares, "*If anyone would come after Me, let Him deny Himself and take up His cross daily and follow Me.*" We've discussed how He was talking about a cross of crucifixion. Carrying His cross. Dying to self and living for Him.

Then Jesus said, "*For whoever will save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?*" If you try to hang on to this earthly existence, you'll miss the eternal realities.

**ETERNAL SHAME OR GLORY?** Then Jesus said, "*for whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*" Are you going to let earthly desires keep you out of heaven?

The apostle Paul says in 2Timothy 1:8,12, "*therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, but share in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God...which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.*" That's good news of salvation.

JC Ryle puts it so well: "The guilt and danger of being ashamed of Christ and His words, to care more for praise of men we can see, than to fear God we cannot see, is a great proof of ingratitude. How can you fear confessing Him before man, He who was not ashamed to die for you on the cross? You will be disowned by Christ for all eternity if you will not confess Christ for a few years on earth." Sobering words, to take to heart.

**WHOM DO YOU FOLLOW?** Let's go back to Christ's words at the beginning of this passage. Are you a carrier of the cross? Are you a denier of self? Are you a taker-upper of your cross? Are you truly a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? How does all this change your daily life?

In these difficult times, carriers of Christ don't succumb to the bad news, because we have great good news of eternal salvation. Many people accent the negative, but Jesus is realistic. He calls His followers to think carefully about truth. Truth is that which conforms to reality as perceived by God. That's why we need, and have, God's written-down Word, the divine eternal perspective of Him who sees the end from the beginning, as He lives and reigns from outside our world of time.

But all this talk about denying and dying, is it just a misguided martyr complex? Good question! Bible scholars note the metaphorical aspects of taking up your cross, dying to self-will and living for God's will, no matter the personal cost of following Christ. But there's more.

**WHAT DO YOU FEAR?** The apostle says in Galatians 2:21, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*" Following Christ could lead to your physical death. Certainly it did for the apostles and countless saints over the past 2,000 years.

But following Christ is not a death-wish, because it leads to real life. Eternal spiritual life begins the moment you are born again in Christ. So believers do not fear those who can kill the mortal body, but Him who accounts for your immortal soul. This puts everything into proper perspective.

There is evil in the world. Trials. Questions. But the Lord has spoken. He has loved us and given Himself up for us. The only One who could do anything about evil for eternity has done so.

**CARRIERS OF CHRIST?** Jesus gives us a glimpse in verse 27, "*But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.*" Because of His obedience, as He came to do the will of the Father, He humbled Himself to death on the cross.

And the Lord Jesus is raised and reigning today. In all our attention to the bad news, let us never forget the Good News. Jesus calls us to follow Him, because He is the victor. That's why we're not consumed by coronavirus or other evils, because we're changed by Christ victorious!

As RK Hughes says, "If you confess Him as Christ, you must cling to His bloody cross as your only hope. And you must take up your own cross, as you deny yourself and follow Him. Do you do this? If so, you have made a good confession." And God will multiply His Word, as you carry His hope and grace and truth, neighbor-to-neighbor. Be a carrier of and for Christ, daily! ☐