

## **FOLLOWING CHRIST WITH A CROSS**

### **Mark 8:34**

**Intro:** It should be the desire of every Christian to want to be obedient to what Jesus has taught and to follow His example as much as possible. Many people often gathered around Jesus eager to hear what He had to say and this passage of scripture is just one of many where He talked to those who thought they wanted to follow Him. Although His words are over 2,000 years old, what He said then is as relevant as if He spoke them this morning.

Jesus said that there were three things one had to do to follow Him: one had to really want to, one had to give up things, and then one had to take up a (thy) cross.

### **I. WHOSOEVER WILL COME AFTER ME...**

1. "Whosoever" invites anybody, everybody, all people, no exceptions.
2. One must "will" or make up the mind or to decide that's what he/she wants to do.
3. Thus a decision made after being thought out, not being forced, but freely.

### **II. LET HIM DENY HIMSELF**

1. A big step, perhaps one of the hardest steps of all in following Jesus is to gain control of one's habits, desires, likes, wants, and actions as so many are "automatic" and done without even thinking. The "natural" way of doing things.
2. To follow Jesus requires an entirely new outlook on one's life:
  - Finances
  - Use of Time.
  - Attitude
  - Wants
  - Surrender of "self."
  - Obedience and Faithfulness to God's Word.
  - Whatever/Wherever/Whenever/However God has in mind.

### **III. TAKE UP ONE'S CROSS**

1. The cross that Jesus carried was one of wood, very heavy, in the form of a "T" and at the top was affixed his name and his crime. He carried it through the streets of Jerusalem as people mocked when He went by, was nailed to it and then it was stood upright and there He hung till He died.
2. The cross was the cruelest method of torture and death and only the worst criminals of all were put to death in such manner.
3. Since the day Jesus took up His cross and died upon it, the cross has become a sacred emblem for those who follow Jesus for it represents who Jesus is, what Jesus did, what Jesus is doing and what Jesus shall still yet do.
4. The cross Jesus tells one to take up to follow Him is not a wooden cross as His was.
  - It is publicly, unashamedly, and gladly identifying with Jesus and all He stands for.
  - It is receiving any and all anti-Jesus things the world and Satan can give.
  - It is being willing and often actually having to give up all because one is a Christian.
  - It is a way of life that images Christ.

#### **IV. FOLLOWING CHRIST WITH ONE'S OWN CROSS (Hebrews 13:12-13)**

1. Let us go with Him through the Garden (Luke 22:39-44)
  - There Christ prayed to the point of collapse, abandoned by His friends.
  - There Christ was at the point of heartbreak for what was ahead.
  - There Christ was strengthened for what He had to do.
  - The Christian may also be alone, abandoned by friends and family
  - There too, the Christian can find purpose and strength for what he/she is to do.
2. Let us climb Calvary with Him (John 19:17, 18)
  - Ridiculed, mocked, beaten, strength gone, Christ staggering, carried His cross through the streets until another was appointed to step in and help.
  - The Christian, too, will have his/her Calvary to some degree sooner or later and could receive public humiliation, imprisonment, physical injury or even death because of refusal to give up being like Christ.

#### **V. THE CROSS WILL ONE DAY BE TRADED FOR A CROWN (2 Timothy 4:8)**

1. Only after Christ faithfully carried His cross and died on that cross did He ascend to the throne room of the Father and sat down in His rightful place wearing His crown.
2. The Christian who faithfully carries his/her cross until death will also receive a crown.
  - Paul looked forward to that moment.
  - Peter traded a cross for a crown.
  - Countless Christians through the ages have also laid down their crosses for a crown when God called them to their eternal home with Him.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Jesus invites everyone to become His follower.
2. To be a follower of Jesus, one must want to with all his/her heart, then give up all that stands in the way of following Jesus, and finally pick up his/her cross which is a way of life that will be very different from what the world wants one to have, one that images Christ.
3. For those who carry their crosses till God calls them home, there awaits them a crown, a Crown Righteousness.