

THE BATTLEFRONT WITH SELF

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Luke 9:23 (NASB95)

²³And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Cross-bearing.

The metaphor of cross-bearing meant much more to Jesus' immediate audience than it does to us. To bear your own cross meant that you had been condemned by the Romans and placed under full submission to their authority. You no longer had any rights or freedom. Your life was over. This was the plight of Jesus to fulfill God's purpose and will.

Keep in mind that no one took Jesus' life against His will. He could have called 10,000 angels to come to his aid, instead, He willingly endured the consequences of obedience to His heavenly Father. God had sent His Son to die for our sin, making the way for our reconciliation with Him.

John 10:17-18 (NASB95)

¹⁷"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.

¹⁸"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Bearing our cross has nothing to do with the common cares and troubles of life. It is a metaphor for the hardness and suffering that we must endure to fulfill God's will and purpose in our life. This is only possible when we completely deny ourselves; to place our life under the full submission to God and give up all our rights and freedoms for the cause of Christ. It is not about me! It is not about you!

Colossians 3:3 (NASB95)

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

If you want to follow Christ, then you must constantly get yourself out of this way. This, my friend, is a daily battle. Denying self goes against our DNA! We want what we want. We like what we like. We do what we do to fulfill our purpose. This is the self that must bear its cross.

Every true believer has been called and chosen to the cause of Christ; to serve the kingdom of God. Every true believer is an ambassador. Each one is charged to the task of pointing others to Christ and His salvation.

Forfeit.

To become the sacrifice for our sin, Jesus had to forfeit His eternal and rightful place of glory in Heaven. He limited Himself in becoming the Son of Man. He stooped so low to humanity, to those who were beneath Him. For our sake, He became poor.

What must we forfeit? It is not that we don't have a right to attain and have all that is ours, but are we willing to surrender our rights to God? Herein lies the battle when God says, "Let me have it," or "Give it to Me," or "Let it go," or "change your plans," or "Go here - Go there." Will you submit to Him?

Herein lies our victory in the battle with self, "Not my will, but Your's be done." When God's will is accomplished, life is the result! God's will works righteousness, peace, and joy.

Serve.

Jesus came to serve, not to be served. He made Himself a servant even to His enemies. This too goes against our DNA. We ask, "What has anybody done for me?" We're too busy taking care of our own needs. We can only invest our time and energy when there is something in it for us. What is the ROI? (Return on investment) Can we give without the expectation of return?

Many are unhappy or unsatisfied in their faith. Jesus came to give abundant life. Does that describe your experience? Abundant life in Christ is experienced through serving.

John 15:11 (NASB95)

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Can we do for others who, in our estimation, don't deserve it? Our doing good to others is contingent upon their behavior toward us. Are we willing to put on Christ and treat them the way we want to be treated? Waiting on others to change is like waiting for the sun to cool down. Just when you think it's finally happened, the morning comes, and it's hot again. Remember, God loved us first before we ever loved Him.

We have been called to be witnesses but that comes with risk. We fear rejection, and/or reproach. Christian brothers and sisters around the world have suffered loss of property, freedoms, and even their lives because they were serving others on behalf of Christ.

Are we willing to suffer for the cause of Christ? Are we willing to surrender our rights and privileges to bring glory to our God?

Herein lies our victory in the battle with self, "Not my will, but Your's be done." When God's will is accomplished, life is the result! God's will works righteousness, peace, and joy.

Love.

John 3:17–18 (ESV)

¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

We are not called to condemn people nor to change their behavior. We are called to love them to Christ. As witnesses, we bear testimony to Christ. We are to be a light to their darkness. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. We must seek to be filled with Him.

We are to love the Republican, the Democrat, the Liberal, the good, the bad, and the ugly. We must get ourselves out of the way. Our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisee. They sought to change or clean the outside of the cup without first cleaning up the inside. Only God can change one's heart. So, we must not seek to change people's behavior without first leading them to Christ!

Matthew 5:43–48 (ESV)

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Cross-bearing: to place our life under the full submission to God and give up all our rights and freedoms for the cause of Christ, and the willingness to suffer the consequences.