

Luke 9:10-27

Verse 10:

--And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

--The apostles return from their mission and speak with Jesus Christ about all that they had done. What interesting conversations those must have been!

--At this point, Christ takes them aside to a quieter area somewhere in proximity to Bethsaida. A lot was happening at this point. John the Baptist was martyred, the crowds were growing, as was hostility from the religious leaders, etc.

--Jesus makes a point to get the disciples some rest. Rest in its proper place, like sleep, can be industrious. Only a fool goes without rest, silence, and contemplation.

Verses 11-12:

--But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here."

--We don't know how long the disciples had with Jesus, but somehow word of them spreads and the crowds come. A very large crowd!

--Wonderfully, Jesus does what He had sent the disciples out to do. He preaches and heals. I find it interesting that this follows immediately after their previous conversation about what *they* had done. Jesus again shows them "how it is done".

--As the day wears on, the disciples encourage Jesus to send the crowds away. I don't think they are tired of the crowds, as some commentators infer. I think it was likely part of their normal process to minister during the day and then send the crowds home to retire as the evening neared, and in this situation, they are surprised Jesus is allowing the process to go so long when they are in such an isolated place.

Verses 13-15:

--But He said to them, "You give them something to eat."

And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men.

Then He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." And they did so, and made them all sit down.

--(13) This particular miracle is mentioned in all four gospels (Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Jn. 6:1-14). This miracle was a powerful public witness and an awesome reflection of Jesus' heart and teaching.

--Jesus tells them to feed the people to make their insufficiency evident. *They should have remembered that He had just given them power and authority!*

John 6:6: *But this He said to test them, for He Himself knew what He would do.*

--They base their inability on their meager resources—isolated location, not enough money, five loaves and two fish. *Interesting to me that Jesus multiplies the food and not the money!*

--This is an essential lesson for every disciple of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6: *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

--Our meager offerings are accepted by Him and then made sufficient for the task at hand.

--Wisely, Jesus has them all sit down on the green grass in groups of fifties or hundreds (**Mk. 6:39-40**). *Have you ever tried to hand out food to a standing hungry crowd of thousands?!*

Verses 16-17:

--*Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.*

--(16) All four gospel writers take note of Jesus' prayer.

--The miracle is described so simply, with few words. The miracle takes place in Jesus' hands, and the disciples receive from Him and then give out only what they have received.

--What a remarkable moment and scene. The compassion of Jesus Christ, the teaching and healing, the care for our physical needs, the green grass and sunset, the miracle that the disciples get to see and participate in, everyone eating their fill, and the deeper spiritual truths lying beneath.

--The miracle was so wonderful that the crowd tries to force Jesus to become king! But He sends them away, and on the next day speaks spiritual truth to them.

John 6:26-27: *Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."*

--(17) The disciples, who served others for Jesus Christ, are also provided for. They end up with more than they started with.

Proverbs 11:25: *The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.*

--There is no more blessed and fulfilling life than a life spent in the service of Jesus Christ.

Verses 18-20:

--And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again."

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

--(18) Luke alone tells us that Jesus was praying before this important conversation. It is fitting that He was doing so before revealing more clearly who He was and what His mission was.

--The language is a bit unclear, but the disciples were either praying with Him, or near enough to see and approach Him.

--Jesus asks them the easier question first. There is less pressure to say what someone else thinks than to admit what you personally think.

--(19) The crowds largely see Jesus as some type of Messianic forerunner. Supernatural, yes. Son of God, no.

--(20) Now Jesus makes it personal. The **you** is emphatic.

--Here we have good Peter. And Jesus blesses Him for publicly declaring what God the Father had taught Him about God the Son (**Mt. 16:17**).

Verses 21-22:

--And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

--Jesus sternly warns them to say nothing more about what He just asked. Why?

--Their belief in Him was correct, but their understanding of His Person and calling were not. They needed to learn before they could go and tell the world!

--Jesus then begins to say clearly what was always prophetically spoken about the Messiah (**Ps. 22; 69; 118; Isa. 53; Zech. 9+11; etc.**).

Verse 23:

--Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

--**Them all.** . . refers to the disciples and the wider multitude (**Mk. 8:34**). Jesus is now addressing all possible followers.

--Jesus is teaching every prospective follower that choosing the things of God and the cross will be reflected in all who follow Him. This is not how things should be, or how things were then, but the way that they are.

--What Jesus just taught His disciples about Himself (**22**) is reflected here in the same order: rejected, killed, raised. Self-denial, cross, crown.

--If anyone desires to come after Me. . .

--A disciple of Jesus must make a personal choice. Not simply live in a Christian family, church, or social atmosphere! *Abraham & Lot*

--There is no such thing as “forced” Christianity. Only people who desire to follow Jesus and those who don’t.

--Amazingly, no Roman soldier ever pointed to a cross and said, *If anyone desires. . .* this following of Christ can be refused. You can choose to live for yourself, for the world, and be ashamed of Him and His words.

--Can we truly say and sing: *I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back?*

--Let him deny himself. . .

--Like Jesus Christ did with His Father’s will, and the disciples did when they left all to follow Jesus, followers of Christ today must make Jesus’ will the central priority of our lives.

--The **himself** is what we all need to be freed from! My biggest problem is myself! Our selfishness, or as some have put it—the self-life.

--What does it mean to deny ourselves?

--It is not merely self-discipline (though we hardly even do that!). *Donuts or Cupcakes?*

--It is not merely turning from gross forms of sin. We can still do so and indulge in the sins of good standing. Like Saul we spare the best but put the sword to all the vile and refuse. *Think of the Pharisees Vs. Prostitutes*

--What is the self-denial Jesus is speaking of here? The total denial of the self-life—not merely a moment or fraction but the entire thing! The center of my life is no longer me.

--It is the total rejection of all self-will that will take me out of the path of God’s will. We don’t need to run and search for self-denial or suffering like Luther or the old monks who would punish themselves. We simply need to decide to make His will first, and deny our will to cross His will as we follow Him! *Think how often the disciples had to deny self and how patient Jesus was with them in the process!*

--Jesus did not seek His own personal interests in the process of God’s ultimate interests. He only did His Father’s will and those things that pleased Him. Jesus wasn’t standing up for His personal “rights”.

--Do we seek to please ourselves without displeasing God? Can we leave the matter of how happy we are in His hands?

*Tozer (The Set of the Sail): *“If Christ is to save the man, He must save him from himself. It is the “himself” which has enslaved and corrupted the man. Deliverance comes only by denial of that self. No man in his own strength can shed the chains with which self has bound him, but in the next breath the Lord reveals the source of the power which is to set the soul free: “Let him take up his cross.”**

--And take up his cross daily and follow Me.

--What is our cross? Our cross is the suffering and death to self that come to us in the path of loving obedience. The cross then becomes the end of our self-life. It was a means of execution.

--The cross was a reality of death and finality. *C.S. Lewis & art*

--Crosses are not discipline or punishment from God.

--Nor are they the consequences of our sin. A bad temper is a sin, not a cross.

--Not all suffering is a cross. The wicked face many hardships but no crosses.

--The cross Jesus is talking about is the suffering we face in this life in obedience to the will of God. Like Jesus before us, disciples carry crosses—willingly—and those come in connection with Christ, His Word, His gospel, His glory, and His will.

--Jesus didn't face the cross because of disobedience. Jesus faced the cross because He was obedient to the will of God.

--The cross **does** interfere with the pretty pattern of our lives. The man who took up the cross knew that his life was over. The cross is not safe. The cross is not convenient. The cross is not fun. *It is important for us to know that it will hurt at times, so we are not shocked!*

--To **take up** our cross means to accept and accommodate ourselves to it. Jesus is saying that any follower of His must not dodge the cross or turn from it. *Think of Jesus' life—thirty-three years heading toward the cross.*

--We all spend quite a bit of time trying to rescue ourselves—or at least parts of ourselves—from the cross. We try to control the way the cross comes to us—bargain with God, suggest limits, select our own crosses—all attempts of the self-life not to be denied or put to death.

Watson (Pure Gold): "Another false notion is the choosing of some line of mortification for ourselves, or the selection of some special cross. This will defeat the very end we want to attain, which is the loss of our will in all things. But the very act of choosing a cross for ourselves keeps alive our own preferences and furnishes a secret nourishment to self-will, and furnishes a little place for self to live under the very pretext of dying to self."

--We cannot follow Jesus and all we want. The Spirit and the flesh. God's will and my will.

Kempis: "The Lord has many lovers of His crown but few lovers of His cross."

--Notice as well that Jesus says **his cross**, not My cross. God does not expect us to face what Jesus faced for us. We will have a personal cross to carry just as His disciples did. *Think of what the cross looked like for the disciples: leaving all to follow; the rich young ruler; Nicodemus' career; the early disciples' Jewish cultural rejection; for many martyrdom; persecuted believers in closed countries today; etc.*

--From those first disciples, to the early church fathers, to Christians from every nation for the last two-thousand years, to this room today, everyone who follows Jesus will all have to take up their own cross!

--There are no arbitrary crosses. There is no cruel and unknowing fate behind them. Our crosses are designed for us. They are truly ours. Suited by the will of God to our person and purpose in life.

--Will you take up yours? Or do you require a path with all blessings and no crosses? There is something in all of us that wants a crossless path! But do you *require* it? Self wants self-preservation, but the Holy Spirit in us will follow God against self when necessary.

--Watchman Nee recounts overhearing a godly older woman pray: *"Lord, I confess I don't like it, but please do not give in to me. Just wait Lord and I will give in to Thee."**

--Christ is calling, saying: Consider yourself as dead with Me. Count your life not dear to yourself. Make yourself of no reputation and accept whatever self-denial, humility, sacrifice, surrender, or pain that might be found in the path of God's will for your life. And do it all for the love of the Father and the joy and glory set before you!

*Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship): *"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."**

--What does this look like? A daily denial of self and acceptance of suffering for and in the will of God. ***Take up his cross daily.***

--What makes this so difficult? Love of self! Praise God, we are called to carry our own cross and not His cross. No disciple of Christ will ever face more suffering in the will of God than Christ has already faced for them. He has the right to ask this of any follower because He already carried their sin in His cross.

Verses 24-27:

--For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.

--Self-denial and the cross are necessary elements in following Christ, but we follow Him beyond the cross!

--Jesus' offer to follow Him to the cross does not cut us off from present or eternal blessings. It doesn't end our life. In fact, the cross sets us free to truly live and be ourselves!

--The first two must happen for the third to be true. Do you want to find life even if the road there is hard? There are some souls here crying: ***YES!***

--Here Jesus shows why following Him—despite the cost—is worth it. Each of the next three verses begins with ***For*** because Christ is giving three reasons why following Him is so reasonable.

1) **(24)** I will only know freedom as I die to self and follow Christ. The cross only kills what actually enslaves us—self and sin. The cross is God's tool to set us free to be who He made us to be. Sin steals, mars, and enslaves! *The cross is the very opposite of the world's messaging!*

--Marriage and children cause me to "give my life" to others, but in doing so, I find life as well. Likewise, by giving my life to God and His will, I actually find what I was truly created to do—please my Creator!

2) **(25)** It is reasonable because we are eternal souls. If we only have the world to gain and no soul to lose, then Jesus' reasoning is wrong. But if you and I have a soul, and eternity is real, then Jesus' question still stands.

--We cannot see how harmful our earthly indulgence is when we only consider earthly losses and not eternal losses. *There was one there scheming how to steal money from the bag!*

Luke 12:15: And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

3) **(26)** There will be a day when Jesus returns in glory. Will we want to be following Him then?!

--Will our lives have been a confession of Christ? Think of the self-denial and cross He carried for us. Did we live worthy of Him, of being called a follower of Him?

--I don't know what it means that the Son of Man could be ashamed of us, but I do know that Jesus Christ never warns in vain.

--**(27)** Jesus then prophesies that some of those living then and there would see the reality of the kingdom of God on some level before they died.

--Commentators differ on their interpretation of this verse. I believe Jesus is talking about the Transfiguration *and* His resurrection. In both those scenarios, the reality of the kingdom of God was evident to the natural eye of His followers.

"The death was central to the work of Christ and therefore it provoked conversation; the prophets spoke of it in the Old Testament, and Moses, Elijah, and Christ conversed about it in the New. In the Christian life, it is just as central, and should it not provoke continuing thought, continuing consideration and conversation, and continuing prayer on our part? So I must ask, very gently: How much thought does the necessity of death by choice provoke, how much conversation? How much prayer does this provoke for ourselves and for those we love? Is it not true that our thoughts, our prayers for ourselves and those we love, and our conversations are almost entirely aimed at getting rid of the negative at any cost—rather than praying that the negatives might be faced in the proper attitude? How much prayer do we make for our children and those we love that they may indeed be willing to walk, by the grace of God, through the steps of rejection and being slain? We are infiltrated by the world with its attitudes, rather than the attitudes of the perspective of the kingdom of God. Not that we should live only in the negative, as we shall see as we go on in this series of studies, nevertheless it is important that we have an understanding of the order. We must not think we can rush on to the last step without the reality of being rejected and slain, not just at that point in our lives when we become Christians but as a continuing situation in our lives."

True Spirituality - Francis Schaeffer