

The Power of the Crucified Life

- A. Mark 8:34-38 defines discipleship as the pursuit of the Person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ, which is the law of the Cross. Self-denial is not only a series of isolated acts of mortification.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25)

1. *"The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. **Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.** It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call." -Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship**

- B. Every believer is called to live the Crucified Life that exalts Jesus and magnifies the glory of God. The life and vibrancy of the Church is commensurate to the adherence and witness of the Crucified Life in every believer. Jesus beckons every believer living in this present Church age, between the tension of the Cross and the Crown (Christ's Millennial Reign), to lay down their lives to make much of Jesus.
- C. This involves the apostolic call to embrace God-glorifying risk to that end. To deny oneself is to be aware only of the Cross and no more of oneself.

II. GOD-GLORIFYING RISK

- A. **Esther 4:16: "If I perish, I perish"**

1. When Haman convinced the king to decree that all Jews be exterminated, Esther, a Jew, was convinced by Mordecai to plead their peoples cause before the king. Esther knew that she could be put to death by royal law for approaching the king. She responded in obedience, taking upon great risk for the glory of God:

"Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:16)

2. Esther did not have special revelation from God that she would not die.

- B. **Daniel 3:16-18: "We will not serve your gods"**

1. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego defied Nebuchadnezzar demands to “bow down and worship” the golden image. Without a promise of deliverance or safety they responded in allegiance to God’s glory:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

2. The glory of God held a stronger sway on their hearts than the promise of comfort or physical safety. The goal of life is not self-preservation, but voluntarily embracing the leadership of Christ until the day we stand before Him. When we reach the end there will be little to celebrate if all we have done is crossed the finish line.

III. THE MYTH OF WORLDY SECURITY

- A. The seduction and myth of worldly security and comfort shipwrecks God’s people from their destiny and plans He has for them.

1. **Joshua & Caleb (Numbers 13:2; v30, v31; 14:7-9):**

- a. The people of Israel were confronted with this reality three years after escaping Egypt. After spying out the Promised Land, Caleb, Joshua and ten other men brought back enormous clusters of grapes, with a rallying battle cry: ***“But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” 31 Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.” (Numbers 13:30-31)***
 - b. The seduction and myth of the security of Egypt could not be shaken from the Israelites. They failed to see and respond to the promises of God through the eyes of faith and they suffered the loss of another 40 years and thousands of lives in the wilderness because of their “faithlessness” (Numbers 14:33).
 - c. How much spiritual ground has the enemy stolen from the Church, and how much have willfully surrendered out of fear of the risk involved in living the crucified life?

- B. Revelation 17-18 reveals Satan’s end-time strategy to deceive the nations in the Great Tribulation. The Harlot Babylon will emerge as a one-world religion preparing the nations worship the Antichrist. Satan will cause many nations to become ***“drunk”*** on her deceptions and ***“the power of her luxurious living”*** offering security (world peace), humanitarian aid, prosperous world economy, luxury, and pleasure.

- C. God’s warning to His people in Revelation 18:4 is to ***“Come out of her, my people, lest you partake of her sins, lest you share in her plagues.”***

IV. THE POWER OF THE CRUCIFIED LIFE

- A. New Testament Christianity exposes the seduction and myth of worldly security, comfort, and safety through the blazing glory of the Cross. The Crucified Life is a call to pursue 100% obedience *unto risk*, motivated by Jesus' worth and triumphant love.

1. **Apostle Paul**

- a. Paul received a divine wounding on the Road to Damascus. The revelation of Jesus, His Cross, His Triumphant Crown, and the Straight and Narrow road of Love beckoned Paul *to lose His life through risk* rather than to *waste it in safety*.

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. (Acts 20:22-23)

...it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored... whether by life or by death.

- b. A love-fueled zeal for the glory of God and worth of Jesus, and desire to make known the fame of His name motivated Paul to endure:

Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28 And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:24-28)

24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:22-24)

- c. Paul suffered loss, but gained Christ.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

- B. Paul's three-fold vision to be conformed to Christ, compelled Him to live the Crucified Life:

1. **To know Jesus and the power of His resurrection**

2. To share in Jesus' sufferings
3. To become like Him in His death

V. THE GOAL OF THE ENEMY: SEPARATION FROM THE LOVE OF GOD

- A. Satan's demonic strategy is to attempt to separate mankind from the love of God by yielding to the pressures and accusations brought on through offense, pain, suffering, trials, persecution, deception, etc.
- B. Paul embraced risk to pursue the Crucified Life and used every circumstance of affliction to drive him closer to the love of God and to bear witness to that eternal weight of God's glory and love. He understood that nothing could separate our hearts from experiencing the love of God.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35, v37-39)

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. (2 Cor. 4:7-9)

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18)

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The Apostle Paul's core conviction was not just success, but witness. The incense ministry of night and day prayer and worship serves as an apostolic signpost of the day when missions and evangelism ceases and the nations are filled with glory of God and the sound of worship.
- B. If our sole passion is to make much of Jesus in this life and death, and the life that magnifies him most is costly love that involves risk. Then to run from risk is to waste your life.