



World Christian Fellowship

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Die to Live Matthew 16:24-26

Matthew 16:24-28, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."*

It really strikes a death blow to the current trend that we see in Christianity. Much of contemporary Christianity and church life is bent on self-centred and self-obsessed.

There are many people who wish to identify themselves with Jesus Christ. They wish to call themselves Christians, and their whole perspective toward it is that they are in it for what they can get out of it.

Christianity has somehow been redefined and Jesus has been turned into a genie, who must jump at our every whim when we rub the magic lamp.

There are some among the charismatics, who say that Jesus is here to make you healthy, wealthy, and happy. They tell us Jesus wants you well or Jesus wants you rich, and if you aren't all those things, then you are not demanding your rights or you don't have enough faith to appropriate what's yours because Christianity is designed for you to get everything you need and want.

Even the fundamentalists and evangelicals through the years have been guilty of propagating a Jesus who is offered to men as a solution for everything.

Would you like to be happy?

Would you like to have abundant life?

Would you like to know peace?

Would you like all your problems solved?

Advertise the get without the give, the gain without the pain.

There are the self-esteem cultists tell us that Jesus came to boost our self-esteem and our self-image.

- There is pain before the gain.
- There is a cross before the crown.
- There is suffering before the glory.
- There is sacrifice before the reward.

This is what our Lord is teaching us in this critical passage. We are called to win by losing, that's the heart of discipleship. We are called to give up before we gain.

Matthew 10:37-39, *He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

But it isn't only Matthew that records this principle.

Mark 10:21, *Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."*

We find the same thing repeated at least three times or four times in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke 14:25-27, *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to Me and does not*

hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

John 12:24-25, *Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*

What we have here in Matthew 16 is an often-repeated principle.

Myriad times it is rearticulated by the writers of the epistles.

Acts 14:22, *strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*

This was one of Jesus' recurring themes.

There are some things that our Lord specially taught, some specially loved truths, which He went back to again.

We see them over and over in the Scripture. We will never understand salvation and we will never understand discipleship unless we understand this principle.

The principle is winning by losing.

Jesus has talked about the sacrifice of discipleship.

Jesus has talked about the cost of discipleship.

Jesus has talked about the pain involved, the severed relationships, the hostility, the reproach, the rejection, the willingness to suffer, and here He reiterates it, this time to His disciples.

Why?

If He has taught them before.

Because it is clear to Him at this juncture that they have somehow missed the lesson.

It is one thing to teach a lesson, it is something else to have it learned. At this point, it is apparent that they haven't really learned it.

- They were raised in the glory concept of Messiah.
- They expected the Messiah to arrive, overthrow the Roman yoke, dethrone the Herod's, establish the Kingdom with all its glory.
- They were waiting all the while for that to happen.

It was very difficult for them to handle the fact that Jesus didn't seem to do that.

Even when He was given the opportunity to be made a king, He rejected it and fled from such attempt.

Instead of the leaders who were the Messianic experts saying, “This is the One,” they hated Him and sought to kill Him, and it didn’t seem to be going the way they had been told it would.

They spent these **2 ½ years** with Jesus up to this point.
His miracles couldn’t be explained humanly.
His words couldn’t be explained humanly.

Finally, by the work of God in their hearts to the affirmation that in spite of what they saw not happening, He was in fact the Messiah.

So, they were willing to wait until it happened. But if you look at verse 16, you see the affirmation of where they were.

Peter, speaking about all of them, giving the consensus, says, “You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

The great thing that they have finally come to.
We know You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God, one in essence with God, the only God who lives!

In response to that, Jesus said in **V 18**, “*I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not ^[a]prevail against it.*”

The gates of death.

- If they take my life, I will rise.
- If they take your lives, you will rise.
- If they martyr those in the church, they will rise.

For death cannot contain the power of the church.

This is a glorious moment for them in Caesarea Philippi, away from all the trouble.

V 19, *And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."*

You will act on behalf of heaven.

When you say something is permitted, you agree with heaven.

When you say something is forbidden, you agree with heaven.

How so?

Because heaven is in the process of revealing itself to you.

They are finding out that heaven is going to be revealing the truth, and they will act on behalf of heaven as the authority on earth.

All they can see is the Messiah in His glory, and the gates of hell not prevailing, and the assembled people being gathered, and they with the authority and the keys, and they see themselves as the heroes of the Kingdom.

A great moment.

They have waited a long time for this.

Then Jesus says in **V 21-23**, *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.* ²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are lian offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Jesus recognized the attacker. Peter was just a tool.

The attacker was Satan who had been trying to divert Him from the cross since the first temptation in the wilderness when he tried to get Him to take over the kingdoms of the world and miss the cross.

The same old thing.

Men think about the

- Gain without the pain,
- Crown without the cross,
- Glory without the suffering,
- Reward without the sacrifice.

That is the way men think, and you are thinking like men think, not like God.

God says the gain comes through the pain and the glory comes through the suffering. It must. There's no other way!

Because you cannot put God, whether incarnate in the Son or alive in the hearts of His people, in the midst of an anti-God society without there being some suffering, without a reproach, without hostility.

2 Timothy 3:12, *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

V 24, *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

The other gospels tell us there was also a crowd collected as well.

Jesus says let me start with the first lesson when I called you and told you to

- leave everything,
- your nets,
- your family,
- your livelihood,
- your lifestyle,
- your home,
- come and follow me, and
- I would make you fishers of men.

Let us go back to that original abandonment of everything to follow me.

What does He mean “if any man will come after me”?

If you want to be a Christian and want to follow Jesus as His disciple, then take up the cross.

If we want, follow our own will and

- do what we want,
- avoid the reproach,
- avoid the hostility,
- avoid the persecution,
- avoid the intimidation.
- and not really representing Christ in the world.

If you come to follow Jesus Christ, you come on His terms.

The disciples, like us, needed a reaffirmation of those terms. Even Christians when one thing goes wrong in their life some people start to disintegrate is God abandoning me?

How do you come to Christ?

In the saving transaction as a person comes to Christ then there are three attitude they must have.

**Self-denial,
Cross-bearing, and
Loyal obedience.**

1. Self-Denial.

V 24, *“Let him deny himself.”*

Let him deny himself.

This is where it all starts.

The word “deny” means to disown, let him disown himself.

It could be translated, “Let him refuse any association or companionship with himself.”

It is hard to refuse companionship with me because I am always around when I am around.

Jesus is not just talking about your self-conscious self.

What Jesus is saying that self as equal to the flesh.

In other words, you must come to the point where you deny that you have the capacity to save yourself.

Or you, on your own, have the capacity to be what God wants you to be.

Or, you have in yourself the ability to be anything good at all. You have got to deny that.

To come to Jesus Christ, you must affirm that there is in your flesh,

Romans 7:18, *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

You can't please God in the flesh.

You can't redeem yourself in the flesh.

You can't be anything to speak of before God in the flesh.

It is a selfless perspective that says I am nothing.

I can contribute nothing to my worth.

I can contribute nothing to my redemption.

The more you love yourself, the less likely you are to need a Saviour.

I disown myself completely.

The first essential in the Christian life.

That is the way you come to Christ and that's the way we live.

We go on denying expression of the flesh.

- The heart must see itself in sin.
- The heart must see itself in damnation.
- The heart must see itself judged and condemned to hell.
- The heart must know that it can do nothing to change that.

In desperation, it reaches out and seeks a rescuer outside itself, and that rescuer is Jesus Christ.

Self is cast away and Christ enters.

Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Subjecting oneself to the resources and to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in an utter rejection of self-sufficiency.

Our WCF church challenge for the decade is to live like that based out of Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Philippi.

Philippians 3:3, *For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,*

The hard-hitting message.

You come to Christ, you come on His terms.

What are His terms?

Self-denial.

Let us look at the Word from Jesus, the first sermon He ever preached, the greatest sermon on salvation ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:3, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The foundation of all virtue is to be poor in spirit.

To be inwardly in poverty.

How poor?

Ptōchos in the Greek.

So poor you must beg.

So poor you have nothing.

- You can't earn a living.
- You can't gain it any way.
- You must beg for it.
- You are destitute.
- You have no way.
- You are humbled by your wretchedness.

As a beggar, crying out for someone to give you something. You are that poor. You have nothing.

Our Lord says those who come into My Kingdom aren't those who think they are somebody, but those who know they are nobody and have no resource.

Until you see we know how damned we are, we will never appreciate how precious His forgiveness is.

Until we know how utterly poor, we are, we can't ever know how great His riches are.

Psalms 34:18, *The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

Out of resources.

Only desperate people come to God.

Luke 18 the tax collector and the Pharisee went into the temple to pray.

Luke 18:11-14, *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'* ¹³*And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'* ¹⁴*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

You come on these terms, when you have run out of resources, when you know you can't do anything about your sin, when you are bankrupt in your spirit.

The whole law of God in the Old Testament is to show men how unsavable they are on their own terms. How irreconcilable they are to God, and how unredeemable.

So that when God comes in Christ, it is all grace to the desperate sinner who in himself can do nothing. The same word reiterated by Jesus throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

The poor in spirit also mourn.

Matthew 5:4, *Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*

Why?

Because they are sorrowful over their condition.

They are meek.

Matthew 5:5, *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

They are humbled and nothing good in them.

They hunger and thirst.

Matthew 5:6, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

They can't get because it isn't within their grasp, but they know they must have it, and so they are utterly dependent on the One who gives life.

First, you come to Christ denying yourself.

You take Christ on His terms, not yours.

The proud sinner wants Christ and his pleasure.

Once you have come to Christ, Jesus is saying here, it becomes a way of life to deny yourself.

A happy way of life.

For I'm not happy when myself acts, I am happy when the Spirit of God acts in me.

Joy comes to me in obedience, and in holiness.

We must mortify our members that are on the earth.

We must put off, **Ephesians 4:22** says, the old man, corrupted by lust.

So, self-denial is the way in and it becomes the life pattern.

We say no to self.

We say yes to the Spirit of God.

What does it mean to live a life of self-denial?

When you are neglected, unforgiven, or when you are purposely set at naught and you hurt with the insult of that oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of.

When your wishes are crossed, and your advice is disregarded.

Your opinions are ridiculed.

You refuse to let anger rise in your heart.

Even defend yourself, you take it all patiently in loving silence, you are dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disgrace, any irregularity, any annoyance, and spiritual insensitivity and endure it as Jesus did, that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any money, any clothing, any climate, any society, any solitude, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation or record your own good works, and when you truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.

When you see your brother prosper and have his needs wondrously met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy and never question God, though your needs are greater and still unmet, that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and humbly admit inwardly as well as outwardly that he is right and find no resentment and no rebellion in your heart, that is dying to self.

Are you dead yet?

2. Cross bearing/ take up his cross.

Dying to self is one thing, taking up the cross is another.

What does that mean?

Loads of people say about from your mother-in-law to your wife to a neighbour.

What is the cross?

The willingness to endure persecution, rejection, reproach, shame, suffering, even martyrdom, for His sake. That's all.

You don't get mystical about the cross of Jesus Christ.

The disciples aren't thinking of that.

He hasn't died yet.

They don't even know that He's going to die on a cross.

He hasn't said that yet.

All He said in verse 21 is He's going to be killed, that's all.

They are not looking at some mystical apprehension of the cross of Jesus Christ.

800 men had been crucified in that area, not much earlier than this very event. Something about a hundred twenty years before.

From a revolt following the death of **Herod the Great**, the Roman Proconsul Varus crucified **2000 Jews**. Crucifixion was somewhat common in the Roman Empire, somewhat common in middle Asia, somewhat common in Egypt, somewhat common in Italy. They had seen crucifixions a lot.

When Jesus said, “Take up your cross,” you know what they saw?

They saw these poor, sad, condemned souls marching along the road with at least the cross beam of their own instrument of death strapped to their backs.

That is what they thought of.

To them, the cross meant you are walking to death, you are moving toward your martyrdom. That’s what it meant.

You must perceive following Me as putting on the instrument of your own execution.

Because the world is going to cut you off.

Not all of you will die, not all the twelve died, but many of them did, as martyrs.

But you will bear reproach and you will be ridiculed if you live for Christ.

What Jesus was saying that when you come to Him you are willing to suffer the indignities of a condemned criminal in the service of Christ.

Now, in our society in our day, it isn't as obviously pronounced to us. We are not being martyred for Christ, but there is still a reproach to bear.

If we walk after Jesus Christ in total devotion to Him, we will set up reaction all around us.

Self-denial means that I will walk after Jesus Christ, I will identify myself with Him, I will name His name up to and including the point of death.

Most of us say, if I ever got to that point, I don't think I could handle it."

But if you ever did, the Bible says in **1 Peter 4** that the Spirit of grace and glory would rest on you, and you would have such an overwhelming sense of the dispensation of the grace of God by His Blessed Spirit that you would find in the midst of your death great joy.

Those who come to Jesus Christ, come on His terms.

You don't just sign on the dotted line.
You don't just stick your hand in the air.
You come to the end of yourself, and you are so enamoured and so desirous of the precious gift of salvation that He offers that you will sacrifice even your life.

After you have received the gift, how we back off from that original commitment?

That is why Jesus is reminding the disciples as well as instructing the crowd.

Matthew 10:24-25, *“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!*

Matthew 10:34-36, *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶ and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’*

There is hostility. There must be when godliness invades ungodliness.

Yet there is a marvellous contradiction because while on the one hand we are a rebuke and a reproach is borne by us in the world.

At the same time, there is an incredible attractiveness to us.

The cross is the suffering that is ours because of a faithful connection to Jesus Christ.

If you could see Jesus Christ going along the road to the cross, the Via Dolorosa, moving to His own execution, bearing on His back the cross upon which He will bear the sins of all the world. In His train, millions of people, all with their cross, willing to take His reproach. Glorious scene.

You are called to Christ to abandon yourself in service to Him.

It is this cross that marks the true disciple.

Luke adds a wonderful word here.

Luke 9:23, *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.*

There is a cross for everyone, there is a cross for me.

3. Loyal obedience.

“And follow Me.”

“Let him be following me.”

It's a way of life.

It's a submissiveness to the Lordship of Christ that becomes a pattern of living.

It can even relate to the word “to imitate.”

1 John 2:6, *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

He walked, putting our feet in His footprints, loyal to the divine will.

Matthew 7:21, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*

John 8:31, *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*

It's a life pattern.

If you are going to take a trip, the first thing you do is say goodbye and pick up your bag.

Second thing; proceed on your trip.

Same thing here. You say goodbye to self, pick up your burden, your cross, follow in loyal obedience.

Getting on the way to God through Christ.

Now that brings us to the paradox in the next two verses.

V 25, *For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

Whoever lives only to save his earthly physical life, whoever lives to preserve his ease and his comfort, and his self-indulgence will lose his spiritual eternal soul.

But whoever is willing to give up his earthly physical life, deny himself, bear the cross, follow in obedience to the Lordship of Christ will save his spiritual eternal soul.

In other words, you have a choice.

- ✓ You can go for it now and lose it forever!
- ✓ Or you can give it up now and gain it forever.

The word “life” there is the same as “soul” and the same as “self,” it’s the same idea. The terms may be different, the idea is the same.

It's talking about yourself, your life, your soul, that inward part of you, that real you.

You spend your life going for the gold right here and you are going to lose everything forever. Forever!

There is a willingness to pay the price that may mean martyrdom, may mean humble self-sacrificing death as in the case of Paul.

It may mean sick sickness as the case of Epaphroditus.

In our day, it's not likely to be a martyrdom kind of thing, but if a person truly follows Jesus Christ, he abandons his own safety, his own security, his own ease, his own comfort, his own selfish indulgence, his own consumptive materialism, and he comes after Jesus Christ. He may have to give up some things in this life.

On the other hand, the Lord may pour other things on him. It isn't that you must give it up, it's that you must be willing to do that.

God is not going to make you be a martyr.

If you come to Jesus Christ on His terms, you would be willing.

Be willing to lose your life in His cause apart from the world to gain eternity rather than spend your life trying to get it here and lose it forever.

Conclusion:

Farmer and owner story

V 26, For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Here is the ultimate exaggeration.

A man owns the globe and everything on it and he loses his soul.

What's he got?

Got nothing.

What is a dead man who owns everything?

He is a dead man.

Worse, an eternally dead man.

Another way to look at it, **V26**, *“What will a man give as an exchange or with what will he buy his soul?”*

Let us say he owned the whole world, could he buy back his soul with it?

No!

If you are going to throw your life away in this world, you will be bankrupt forever.

But if you abandon your life and give it to Jesus Christ, you will be rich forever.

God may just choose to pour out riches in this life as well.