

TAKING UP OUR CROSS

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Mark 8:34-38 says, "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? The same event is recorded in Luke 9:23-26. But this is not the only occasion where Jesus Christ taught that his disciples must take up their cross and lose their lives for his sake. In Matthew 10:38-39, the Lord says, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Christ told the rich young man in Mark 10:21 to "come, take up the cross, and follow me." Finally, in Luke 14:26-27, Jesus says, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Let us consider what it means to take up our cross and lose our life to follow Christ.

The purpose of the cross

Although crucifixion was a method of execution that was particularly designed to inflict a maximum amount of pain and suffering, a cross does not merely symbolize suffering. The cross was ultimately an instrument of death. To take up our cross means we must die. That is why Jesus emphasized that to take up our cross, we must lose our life for his sake and the gospel's (Mark 8:34-36; Matt 10:38-39; 16:24-25; Luke 9:23-24; 17:33; John 12:25). Again, that means dying. It is our old man that must be crucified (Rom 6:6). That means our own will and desires must be completely forsaken (Gal 5:24; 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Pet 4:1-2). Paul was crucified in

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this way (Gal 2:20; 6:14). And all Christians must be dead with our life hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3). This must be done *daily* (Luke 9:23-24).

Losing our life

Jesus said, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35). To save our life in eternity, we must lose our life now. Again, losing our life means dying. To be saved, we must put to death our old man and its ways. Before becoming a Christian, “*we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*” (Eph 2:3), but now we have “*put off the concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*” (Eph 4:22) and “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph 4:24). We have “*put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him*” (Col 3:9-10). The old man is dead: “*Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*” (Rom 6:6). Paul said, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Gal 2:20), and “*the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*” (Gal 6:14). We must not love this world or live for anybody or anything but the Lord: “*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*” (Col 3:3). We do not live anymore for ourselves but only for Christ (2 Cor 5:14-15). We live the rest of our time in the flesh only to do God’s will (1 Pet 4:1-2). Only by doing this will we be able to go to heaven. But if we choose to “save our life” now, we will lose our souls in eternity.