

Hard Sayings Of Jesus

Lesson 6

I. This Week's Hard Saying

Matt 16:24 24 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. KJV

Mark 8:34 Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. KJV

Luke 9:23 23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. KJV

II. Four Different Interpretations

- a. This saying is another way Jesus had of shaking up their **expectations** or perhaps He was expanding upon his rebuke of Peter regarding Jesus' earlier statement of going to the cross.
 1. Problems: It is not a demonstrable characteristic of Jesus' speech for Him to say things merely for their **shock value**.
 2. It's unlikely that if His purpose is to merely emphasize a point that these same words are going to be found in two other synoptic gospels in different **contexts**.
- b. Since Jesus knows that **Peter** will one day himself be crucified He said it as a warning to him.
 1. Problem: Why would the Holy Spirit make a point of how Peter would die? Nearly all the initial disciples were martyred in one way or another. So **why single Peter out?**
- c. The saying is merely a **metaphor**: Jesus is simply saying that the people who are his followers should not expect the Christian life to be easy and that we all have our 'burdens' to bear.
 1. Problems: Everyone who goes through life endures suffering whether a follower of Jesus or not. Therefore it would be pointless to **emphasize** such an obvious fact of life.
 2. Paul and the writers of the other Epistles did not interpret this passage metaphorically. They suffered **experientially**, but unlike us, they also suffered specifically for the sake of the gospel.
 3. Despite their experiential suffering, Paul and the other Epistle writers **never** called enduring such suffering taking up their crosses.
 4. If Jesus was speaking about a burden He is more likely to have used the word **yoke** as it is more descriptive of a burden, but He used the word cross. Matt 11:30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. KJV
- d. Jesus meant that the literal **cost of discipleship** was death. The emblem of that death, the "cross" was to be understood in both a literal and a figurative sense.

III. Thinking It Through

- a. The interpretation of the statement is bound up in the meaning of the word **CROSS** as His hearers would have understood it.
- b. Josephus tells us that following the death of Herod the Great, the Roman proconsul Varus crucified two thousand Jews. Crucifixion was a **common practice** in the Roman Empire.
- c. The disciples would have **seen** condemned men marching along a road with the instrument of their own death tied to their backs. Carrying one's cross in that culture meant walking to one's death.
- d. The taking up of a cross is **mortal**. It is deadly. Death on the cross may be very slow, but a cross has only one objective—it is ruthlessly fashioned to bring death to the individual who carries it.
- e. Therefore, disciples of Christ needed to comprehend that following Jesus is an act of **putting on** the instrument of their own execution; **it is the cost of discipleship**. Paul seems to support this understanding: 2 Cor 4:10-11 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. KJV Rom 8:36 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. KJV 1 Cor 15:31 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. KJV Phil 1:20 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. KJV
- f. The word 'cross' is never found in the plural number, nor is it ever found with the indefinite article before it—"a cross," it is personal and possessive in the active voice. **The cross is yours**.
- g. Taking up your cross is an **intentional act**. It was as intentional for Jesus as it is for each disciple. John 10:17: "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man

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taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." If any man will follow after me let him take up his cross daily, and follow me. KJV

IV. The Mortality of the Cross

- a. The cross as an emblem of death signifies that the one picking it up is going to his or her death. There are several **implications** of this for the believer.
 1. As it was with Jesus so it is with each disciple a total abandonment of self to the obedience of the **Father's will**. Matt 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. KJV
 2. There is only **one way** that the will of the Father can be accomplished in Christ or in the lives of any of His disciples...death. Philippians 2:6-8 that, He "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross." Matt 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it . KJV
 3. It implies faith in the **goodness** of God acting on behalf of the disciple. We know that the Father will providentially tend to all the details of life and we gladly yield them to Him. Matt 6:32-33 For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. KJV
 4. The disciple is crucified to the **world** even though living in it. *"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* Galatians 6:14 NKJV
 5. All natural fleshly urges and ways of being have been rejected by the disciple and our lives are **forfeit** to conformity with Christ. *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* Galatians 5:24 NKJV
 6. The self is crucified with its propensity **to sin**. *"knowing this ,that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."* Romans 6:6 NKJV
 7. The believer's new life in Christ is valued as the **only life** worth living since he has been crucified with Christ. *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* Galatians 2:20 NKJV
 8. Should the will of the Father require it, beating for the cause of Christ would be **joyfully** accepted by His true disciple. Acts 5:40-41 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. KJV
 9. It implies a state of mind in the disciple that has **forsaken all things** of this world, and endures all things that this world can subject him to, for Christ's sake. Phil 3:8 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung , that I may win Christ, KJV

V. Application

When properly understood this hard saying of Jesus is indeed a hard saying. It leaves the believer in the unmistakable position of having to live a life of total emptying of the self in order to be called a disciple.

The authors of *Boundaries* counsel believers to take *control* of their lives by imposing self-protective strategies on others. They suggest the "cross" is what you suffer when you fail to set "boundaries." How would you reconcile that notion with the words of Jesus who said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." KJV

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- a. This saying is another way Jesus had of shaking up their _____ or perhaps He was expanding upon his rebuke of Peter regarding Jesus' earlier statement of going to the cross.
 - i. Problems: It is not a demonstrable characteristic of Jesus' speech for Him to say things merely for their _____.
 - ii. It's unlikely that if His purpose is to merely emphasize a point that these same words are going to be found in two other synoptic gospels in different _____.
- b. Since Jesus knows that _____ will one day himself be crucified He said it as a warning to him.
 - i. Problem: Why would the Holy Spirit make a point of how Peter would die? Nearly all the initial disciples were martyred in one way or another. So _____
- c. The saying is merely a _____: Jesus is simply saying that the people who are his followers should not expect the Christian life to be easy and that we all have our 'burdens' to bear.
 - i. Problems: Everyone who goes through life endures suffering whether a follower of Jesus or not. Therefore it would be pointless to _____ such an obvious fact of life.
 - ii. Paul and the writers of the other Epistles did not interpret this passage metaphorically. They suffered _____ but unlike us, they also suffered specifically for the sake of the gospel.
 - iii. Despite their experiential suffering, Paul and the other Epistle writers _____ called enduring such suffering taking up their crosses.
 - iv. If Jesus was speaking about a burden He is more likely to have used the word _____ as it is more descriptive of a burden, but He used the word cross. Matt 11:30
- d. Jesus meant that the literal _____ was death. The emblem of that death, the "cross" was to be understood in both a literal and a figurative sense.

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- a. The interpretation of the statement is bound up in the meaning of the word _____ as His hearers would have understood it.
- b. Josephus tells us that following the death of Herod the Great, the Roman proconsul Varus crucified two thousand Jews. Crucifixion was a _____ in the Roman Empire.
- c. The disciples would have _____ condemned men marching along a road with the instrument of their own death tied to their backs. Carrying one's cross in that culture meant walking to one's death.
- d. The taking up of a cross is _____. It is deadly. Death on the cross may be very slow, but a cross has only one objective—it is ruthlessly fashioned to bring death to the individual who carries it.
- e. Therefore, disciples of Christ needed to comprehend that following Jesus is an act of _____ the instrument of their own execution; it is the cost of discipleship. Paul seems to support this understanding: 2 Cor 4:10-11; Rom 8:36; 1 Cor 15:31; Phil 1:20 20
- f. The word 'cross' is never found in the plural number, nor is it ever found with the indefinite article before it—"a cross," it is personal and possessive in the active voice. _____
- g. Taking up your cross is an _____. It was as intentional for Jesus as it is for each disciple. John 10:17

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