

Weekly Devotions: THE REFINING FIRE OF TRIALS 19

To Follow Jesus, You Need to Carry Your Cross

If we are serious when we say we want to be like Christ, then like Him we must carry our cross. Like Him we need to walk the road to Calvary and share His sufferings.

Peter Kusmic, a Yugoslavian Christian leader, said; “So much popular Western evangelical religiosity is so shallow and selfish. It promises so much and demands so little. It offers success, personal happiness, peace of mind, material prosperity; but it hardly speaks of repentance, sacrifice, self-denial, holy lifestyle and willingness to die for Christ.”

Read Mark 8: 34-38

Jesus said those who want to follow Him must be ready to do two things; take up our cross and deny ourselves. The crosses we bear are not simply the trials or hardships we face. They are also not an illness or the irritating boss we have to work with.

To carry our cross is to be ready to do the Father’s will whatever it may cost us. Kent Hughes, expounding on the gospel of Mark, said: “A cross comes from specifically walking in Christ’s steps, embracing His life. It comes from bearing disdain because we are embracing the narrow way of the Cross. It comes from living out the business and sexual ethics of Christ in the marketplace and world.... It comes from extending oneself in difficult circumstances for the sake of the gospel.”

He continued; “Our crosses come from and are proportionate to our dedication to Christ. Difficulties are not an indication of cross-bearing; difficulties **for Christ’s sake** are.”

To carry the cross, we need to die to self. In a self-centered, self-willed, self-love, self-interested world, to follow Jesus’ footsteps is to die to self and to obey God’s will alone. Jesus said that our love for the world must die in order that we may gain eternal life.

Questions to Ponder

1. What are Jesus expectations of those who believe (34)? What is one thing you need to do now to fulfill each of Jesus’ expectations? What cross are you bearing at this moment and what sacrifice/s you need to make for the sake of Jesus & the gospel?
2. What does Jesus mean by “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (35)? How can a believer ‘forfeit his soul’ in his / her pursuit of success in the world? What warning did Jesus give His disciples in verse 38?