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Sermon preached by Pastor J.W. Tyler.

on Sunday Morning. May 13. 1973.

Lesson. Philippians 2.

Text. Luke 9.23.

We have here, beloved friends, the doctrine of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is a comprehensive term in Christian theology, embracing the sum total of all the sufferings of the Son of God incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ from His birth to His death, principally relating to the sorrows He bore in the Garden and our sins which were laid on Him, and the curse of God that pierced Him, His vicarious, dolorous sufferings at the pillar, - the scourging, and on Calvary's cross. In this paragraph we have the application of His sufferings to His beloved people, for if we are His the greatest evidence of it will be the complete fulfilling of the concentrated, amazing prayer of the child of grace, - "That I may know Him." You will never get beyond that: let it fill your life and eternity. "That I, a wretched, vile sinner deserving hell, that I may know Him as my Saviour, mine, my Father, Husband, Friend, Redeemer, All." Does this fill your soul, your life? I tell you "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," will be a brief exposition of the word. The wonderful, prevalent power of His Resurrection covers the whole election of grace, raises them out of their sleep in death, to regenerate His chosen people, and these corruptible bodies that bring us almost to the dust of death. But concerning those who know the Lord, His grace, love, compassion, sweet mercy, He brings them to feast at the royal banquet. There is the power of His resurrection to raise you out of self and guilt, trouble, fear, temptation, - all the graves you are buried in, and to lift you up in spirit to heaven. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."

How beautiful as in this magnificent season of resurgence in Creation the exquisite beauty of the foliage, the budding and the blossoms, to know this in your souls: to find, though you look and feel dead you have life, amazing virtue and power so your soul blossoms, buds and bears fruit. So when you sink in weakness you find there is celestial, heavenly strength: when you are full of fear there is a power that

raises you and sets your feet on the Rock.

X "The power of his resurrection." Have you prayed for it this morning? have you asked it in His Name? "and the fellowship of his sufferings." You see, a child of grace is so well instructed as to recognise that in the fellowship of His sufferings is the greatest blessing derived to the soul, and two wonderful truths are married by God. What are they? "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." So there is this fellowship with Him in suffering. (You may say to me; "I know what suffering is, the trials, sorrows, difficulties of life." You want to know it is the fellowship of His sufferings.) The Lord so sanctifies your cross, and you begin to lose sight of your cross as you see His. When you see His sharp sorrows you begin to lose sight of your own, and this capacitates your redeemed soul for sympathy with Him. It is wonderful to participate with your Saviour in feeling.

"We would with Thee sympathise  
In Thy bitter passion." (827)

This may be discerned as the method by which the Lord weans you from all below and brings closer to Himself and to the Kingdom. When you enter into fellowship with Him you have a foretaste of heaven in your soul. O the bliss! the wonder of it! So you may be "made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Listen, my friends, "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." (Isa. 52.14), and the people of God coming into a deeper path each year of life know what it is to be made conformable to His sufferings.

X "Confirming the souls of the disciples." (Acts 14. 22) Paul had been stoned and drawn through the streets, they thinking he was dead. His battered human frame by a divine miracle was restored, and he did not take flight. He returned to the scene of his sufferings: he went back for the benefit of a few dear souls already born of the Spirit in the cities. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, - my whole concern is to finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 20. 24) So he returned to the scene of the attempted assassination and then "confirming the souls of the disciples,

and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Did you hear it? You may say; "Is it not distressing and desolating to our spirits?" Not if you fear God and wish to be right; if you wish a blissful eternity at His right hand, and that you may without fear behold your Judge.

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom." There are times when you read this and all you see is "you must through much tribulation." You see this tribulation; you believe it, you have tasted it: you are made willing. But the glory of Immanuel's Land irradiates your soul, the bright shining of the city and the King in His beauty, and you see you must enter the Kingdom; you are on your way to it. So tribulation is swallowed up in the glory of the Kingdom, and the prospect of being with and like Him for ever.

X So do we know what prayer is concerning the fellowship of His sufferings? A word that is needful is, you will have noticed with the evangelists concerning the truth of the cross, at this period of time the Lord commenced to reveal to His disciples a truth they were obviously ignorant of. He had called them; they followed Him, believed in Him as the Christ of God. They saw His miracles, heard His sermons, they loved Him. They little understood that He was on a journey. They little knew He was on His way to Jerusalem, not to be enthroned in a temporal kingdom and their Roman overlords cast off and the kingdom restored to Israel, and Christ to set up a kingdom in the holy city. They little knew He was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and to die on the cross, to be buried and on the third day rise again. At this point He began to enunciate the glorious doctrine of the cross. He said to them; "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." Then He related it to them and said; "If any man will come after me." I want to point out that our blessed Redeemer in His compassion knows what we are able to bear, and He will never tell you or lay anything on you only as you are able to bear it. He said; "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now....I am going to tell you by degrees and as you are able

to bear them; gradually as I strengthen you I will tell you more." There are things He has to tell you; you could not bear them if He told you now. It is by degrees. So He knew the exact moment of time when they were able to bear to hear the doctrine of the cross. This is an important point of truth. Where there is a babe in grace, or a young man or maiden, if the Lord told them everything it would crush them. There are those before me this morning the Saviour has much to tell yet, but not until you are able to bear it. You older friends have seen the wisdom of God in not telling you all until you are able to bear it. You will have strength enough, and none to spare." "My grace is sufficient for thee." You will prove in your spiritual life year by year, there will be chapters or periods as you are able to bear it He will tell you more.

I will suggest to you a line of meditation. Has the Lord told you concerning His journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die? I want to hear it from your lips. You say; "Yes, He is my hope." Do you stop there? The Saviour did not. He said to them all; "If any man..." How does this relate to you? In salvation. Immediately He applied it. "Are you My disciples? true followers? If any man will." There is a will in it. He said to them all, and I want to say to you all, and to myself; "If any will come after me." Does that find you? Are you coming after Him?

I want to dilate on this. "If any man will" and you will never come unless you have a will. The will is the driving force in man. What you will is the strength of movement. You will never come after Christ unless you will to. There is a holy force in you; a gracious determination. "If any man will come after me." Let me fence the subject. If you are not coming after Him, what are you doing? If you are not following Christ as a true disciple who are you following? I would judge you are either following Satan or the world. He says; "If any man will come after me." There are three things in this. Here is the divine manual of instruction to be a true Christian. What are the manual instructions? Here they are. The first is: "Let him deny himself." You have not started to come after Him unless you practise self-denial: you must not hold on to your idols. This is the first basic principle; "Let

him deny himself." The flesh will never do that only under grace. There are forms of religion that impose great restrictions on their followers. It is only grace enables a poor sinner to deny himself.

If you say; "All right; I can dispense with one or two things." These are things you do not think much of and this is no sacrifice to you. This strikes at the root: a Christian is crucified to the world and the world to him. They are things the flesh wants.

The second principle is, "and take up his cross daily." Christ carried His cross at first. Let him take up- what, his bed of roses? No: his cross daily. You will have a cross if you are a true Christian. The cross is all the suffering, pain, trials and tribulations of a child of God. You ask; "Have I been led forth by the right way?" Don't start saying if you could have your time over again you would remould your life. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Prov. 16.33), and in your lot you have got a cross, whether you are fifteen, thirty, seventy, or eighty. "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." It is a daily cross.

"I must expect a daily cross; Do you?

Lord, sanctify the pain;

Bid every furnace purge my dross

And yield some patient gain." (300)

So "let him deny himself, and take up his daily." Then what? You will be perfectly free to follow Christ without encumbrance. Unencumbered? The cross is not cumbersome in following Christ. It is the unworthy weights and besetting sins that are cumbersome. There is nothing to hinder you following Christ closely. Now you see the beauty of the word.

"And he said to them all." The coverage of this to true disciples is world-wide and in all ages. It is not modified: it is the same. "And he said to them all." It means your godly grandparents walked this path, and if your parents feared God they walked it. If you are the people of God you will walk it, as did all the holy apostles and prophets. It is the same path. I do not like to hear the term; in the old days the people of God suffered more, as if they do not now. Because you do not tell your troubles,

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people think you have none. I know there were days of persecution: there are now internally. God's dear people who live near Him suffer.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me." ("Will". The will is the driving force of the whole person.) When the Lord regenerates a soul He deals wonderfully with the faculties. I will name three. First, the understanding. The understanding of a sinner in unregeneracy is dark. When the Lord quickens a soul He illuminates the understanding. Then, the affections. When grace enters a soul the affections are sanctified and focussed on the Lord. The Lord deals with the will. In the Adamic fall the will is in bondage to sin and Satan. The Lord does not neutralise the will; He sanctifies it, and in doing that the will becomes obsequious to His will. Your will is to come after Christ, and you will know the driving force of a sanctified will in you, It is your will to leave the world and go after Christ. All your spiritual faculties are in unison: with love and joy you come after Christ. Your back is on the world and your face to Christ.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me." Why do you want to? "Thou hast the words of eternal life." "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." So why do you wish to come after Him? For sheer necessity;— your sin, guilt, temptation, fear. There is no one else to go to. Why do you come after Him? For love's sake: because of His unparalleled beauty: because He is all in all. Are you there? If you have got that you have got the manual. Will it be difficult to follow Christ? No. Under love

"I could from all things parted be,  
But never, never, Lord, from Thee." (1105)

This is grace. They are great words: they are true. That is why I read the Lesson where I did, because the foundation for this is Christ. He denied Himself. We are called to consider Him "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." See the scope and dimension of His self-denial: He "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. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." He is your Pattern. When He accomplished the work of salvation and redemption He did not abhor the virgin's womb and the grave, and He ascended "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things." And "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

Now then, are you willing this day to deny yourself? With this loving example are you willing? Is there that in your soul that you are willing to do homage to Christ and to take up your cross daily, in submission wrought by love? "Let him take up his cross daily, and follow me." Blessed be God. Amen.