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Substance of Two Sermons Preached by our Pastor

on Sunday, September 8, 1974.

Lesson. Luke 9. vv. 1-36.

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, For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Matthew 16. vv. 24-25.

We have here the vital teaching of Christ concerning true discipleship;- what it is ~~like~~ like to be a true follower of our blessed Redeemer, and what is requisite by the sovereign grace of God. I will say immediately the whole of the subject matter before us in these verses and in the whole paragraph is repugnant to sinful, proud flesh. For if we are left to depraved flesh we shall go about to save our lives and escape the cross and all forms of Christian care, and we shall miserably lose our lives. The whole concept is based on the path of Christ Himself. There is a willingness in a soul with spiritual understanding that it is the divine will and counsel of God that all His dear people have a cross, and there are certain requisites to taking up the cross, and there is the ultimate; of victory and triumph: their life is saved. I propose therefore, to make particular reference to the context.

I will give a title so you will remember it with clarity in your understandings. It begins at; "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." The title is this: "Christ unveiling to His disciples a fundamental and glorious truths they were ignorant of."- unveiling to them the way of the cross. To us it seems almost incredible that the blessed leader of the disciples, Simon Peter, could give that noble confession by the Holy Ghost of the Deity of the Son of Man; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." A monumental utterance in the Bible this is, and all the Lord's children are brought to it by revelation and holy faith. Listen: "Thou art the Christ, the Messiah,

the One who has come to save, the Son of the living God." - essential majesty in His divine Person. It is incredible that he uttered this, and yet, in common with all the disciples he was ignorant of the cross. He immediately, when Christ unveiled the cross and His approach to it, - must it is imperative: that is to say, it is the divine counsel of God; must: it is incredible that immediately, Peter, the same dear man who had nobly confessed Him, took Him and began to rebuke Him, - "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Satan of course was speaking through him. "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan." Satan would have dissuaded Christ from going to Calvary to be crucified.

I will make one application of this to you. What would you say concerning the Lord and His cross? Would you, a poor, guilty sinner, say; "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."? I have got a respect for the tender love and affection Peter felt to the dear Lord, but his salvation was pendant on the cross. What is your response? I know mine. I can do no better than quote Toplady with depth of feeling;

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

I have got nothing else to cling to; only the cross, and God grant that I may be clinging by faith to the cross, or there is no hope for a poor, perishing sinner. That is the whole secret of my religion and my life; a poor miserable, wretched sinner. I hope I am clinging to the cross of Christ.

So does it not sound incredible to you that Peter expressed himself thus "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."? The whole Church of God must have remained in their sins apart from His vicarious obedience and death; the shedding of His vital blood. When we read of the cross of Christ it means first the whole of His sufferings from birth to death. The life of your Saviour was a suffering life to the tomb. I could easily call over the table. It was suffering to the precious Lamb of God to live in the sin-polluted atmosphere of this dark world and in the presence of multitudes of sinners. -it is suffering to you.- He suffered at the hands of ~~sinner~~ creatures, - how He suffered! They despised, mocked, derided Him. He suffered at the hands of His enemies, intent to slay Him. They rejected all He said and denied His claims. He was despise

and rejected of men. This is not pleasant for human beings. If you were walking on the pavement and one turned his face and you knew it was to despise you, this is a painful experience. Think of the dear Saviour: all through His time He was despised and rejected of men.

He suffered too, not only at the hands of His enemies, but at the hands of His own friends. If ever there was a tragedy it is surely this. All the disciples so emphatically stated their fidelity and gave Him their bond of promise that they would never leave Him nor forsake Him: they would go prison and to death with Him. They meant it. Yet immediately Christ in the gloomy garden was apprehended, they all ran away. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." You can read it and say; "He is God." You must not forget as Man He keenly felt the lack of fidelity with His disciples. In the time of His apprehension He sees them all run away, and He is alone. Yet we have the beautiful Scripture; "and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." This is the path too, in measure, of a Christian. I do not say you will always live in it, but you will know it, and you will say with acute pain; "Lord, I am alone on the earth." There are areas of your soul where you stand completely alone. If any look on you they may think you are a cheerful individual and have every comfort, yet before God there is acute loneliness.

He suffered in a severe form at the hands of His friends, and it did not stop there. There was Peter going to the palace of the high priest, following afar off, and he went in and sat with the servants, to see the end. He sat with His enemies, and presently with oaths and curses he three times denied Him. If you want to know the dimensions of the love of God, you have an idea if you know the depth of your sinful heart and nature. The Lord could turn and look on him in love. "And he went out, and wept bitterly."

He suffered terribly at the hands of Satan. It is clear that His dear people must expect to follow Christ to the wilderness after baptism to be tempted of the devil. Think of the sufferings of Christ! The cross sets forth this too; the time He qualified His sufferings as He came to Gethsemane. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful,- this exceeds all other forms of suffering,- even unto death."

Let me remind you, and the ^{Lord} call up sympathy and love in your breast;

He suffered in a way He never had before,- at the hands of His own beloved Father, who awakened the sword of inflexible justice against the precious Shepherd. He put in His hand the cup of wrath,- your hell and my hell; all in one cup, and He drank it. This is the cross of Christ.

I will refer to three basic points as He unveiled them, and what His disciples thought prior to this. How did they think He would save them? They had a vague concept of an earthly kingdom set up. They were ignorant until He revealed it to them that He must go to Jerusalem. "He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." He must. I wonder whether must has any influence on your spirits, because we shall take it up in the last hymn (307) concerning your path as a Christian. You will find it is not removed from you. Your path, the way of God's choosing, contains a cross. I never thought years ago, when I was constrained to take an important step, and the sunshine was beautiful in one's heart and person, as I embraced a rich blessing I embraced a cross. You do. You can be so happy you hardly know how to contain your joy. Be not deceived. Let nothing spoil your happiness. "In the day of prosperity be joyful." I hope I am never a kill-joy for any. I want to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Whatever the path that is of God, whatever step you take in the fear of God, and whatever is accomplished in your life, there is a cross in it. For several years I knew little of a heavy cross. Whatever is of God, you get a cross in it. There is a must in it. It is the Lord making you willing, and this will assist you greatly. It was by divine teaching and leading I was favoured to take a step, and there is a cross in it, and there is to every child of God an unveiling of their cross, and you begin to see it is a cross: things are balanced.

Let me name to you the three vital points. When Peter rebuked the Lord, and said; "Be it far from thee." his mind was concentrating on the present. How often that is where we fall down: our minds concentrate on the present. If your mind concentrates on that, and you have not intelligence concerning the fact that it does not stand in the abstract, you will surely have the same feeling; "This shall not be unto thee." You want to flee from it. So it is incumbent on me to name the three basic principles. The first is

the original; the all-wise counsels and decrees and pleasure and will of God; and Christ knew it must be. The word sets before us that it is imperative, and I would have you view it as imperative because of immutable love. It must be: love to sinners fills His heart. Take the verse;

"It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners fills His heart
And makes Him choose to die." (1012)

It is the must of divine love: must. So that is the glorious original. It is pivotal: everything relates to it. It is the decree and counsel of God, and it must be, "It is My Father's will: it is My will: it is the will of the Holy Ghost: it is the will of God; it must be."

So cast your minds into this channel: the cross; the immediate; it cannot be viewed in the abstract. View first the glorious original; the counsel, will, and pleasure of God. Then the immediate; the cross. That is number two. And the path, the divine method; God's own, only method. There is no other could have redeemed us. In the eternal wisdom, love, goodness of God He knew this was the method of His holiness and justice, the method to save. He must.

The third part is the ultimate. What is the ultimate? the glorious issue? How could it issue in victory, triumph, glorious redemption? Via the cross. So these are the three basic, vital, cardinal points to consider. Don't look just at the cross; at the immediate. Ask God to give you grace and wisdom to look at the three. How wondrous that on Calvary's cross the dear Redeemer cried triumphantly;— the mighty Victor "It is finished." and then dismissed His Spirit and voluntarily died. Victory via the cross. There is no other way.

I want to impress on your mind that it is the same with the people of God. Your sufferings are not meritorious, but your way to the Kingdom is via the cross. What is a cross? You will see it. I do not know when, but you will see it one day. You will find you have got a cross. That is why I read the Lesson as I did in St Luke concerning the cross. Did you notice the point? He, of all three evangelists gives one extra word on this. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." You will come into it daily. It is not a matter of

once a month, or once a year; it is daily. Does it sound strange doctrine to you? Is there anything exceptional or unusual about it in a Christian pulpit or a House of Prayer? Definitely not. If the dear Redeemer suffered the death of the cross, it is certain all His dear people will know fellowship with Him in His sufferings and have a cross. How wonderful is the connecting link. Having unveiled His cross, - would to day we might view His cross by faith! If we could look on a dear suffering Redeemer we should know a happy day. To 'see Him bleed for me.' I need it renewed and revived. I need another application of pardon; a complete clearance. So as I rest my weary head on the pillow I may feel if the Lord comes to night, if I never open my eyes in this world I shall open them in Paradise. "I'm clean, just God, I'm clean." How many hearts echo this? It is what you long for.

"To the dear fountain of Thy blood,
Incarnate God, I fly;
Here let me wash my spotted soul
From crimes of deepest dye." (764)

O this cross! If you are ready to perish, guilty, stained and dyed with sin, and the Lord unveils the cross, you will look with adoring faith on the sinless sin Bearer with a sweet hope in your soul. Having revealed the doctrine of His cross,- all men who have life in their souls in all ages, in all parts of the world have been directed to the cross. Yes; the time came with you when the Holy Spirit directed you to the cross, and as you looked, poor serpent-bitten, stung to death creatures, as you looked you lived. You were healed, pardoned; peace flowed into your soul. What a day when you first looked at the cross! Him who hung on yonder tree! and you lived. I would like to cheer you; I want it myself. If you feel wretched and miserable, there is hope here: there is hope nowhere else at all. The most wretched sinner, deeply dyed; an old sinner; you say; "I am a man of the world. I am a sinner." You have got nothing only your own corruption and shame; you are not assuming anything. You are going to die. Some say; "I have got courage. I have faced all types of difficulties and dangers in my life." If you have life in your soul you will be afraid to die until you know Christ. You will have fears you never mention. "What if I close my eyes and be banished from God and all I love

on earth, and find myself in the unquenchable fire?" There is hope here for you. I wish this gospel might completely fill this Sanctuary, There is hope for you in the cross. You have been tormented you are out of the secret and you will sink in ruin. There is hope here in the cross. I know this is a verse that is fairly frequently quoted, but

"The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a Throne of Grace,
The Saviour's blood to plead." (527) Amen.