

Luke 9:23

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Date: 05 September 1982

Preacher: Jacob Nantomah

[0 : 0 0] Our sermon this morning is taken from the passage that we read earlier on. Luke chapter 9.

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

I entitled the sermon, What Jesus Requires of Us. And the passage as I've just read for special consideration is Luke 9.23.

It is one of the texts in the New Testament where our Lord explicitly makes certain demands of his disciples.

Very often we take the attitude that the demands of our Lord in the New Testament is one of our dependents on him. We depend on him for everything, even our faith.

[1 : 1 5] But here in this text, he comes out clearly, making a specific demand on us, something that we have to take a step to do.

And he said to all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Thus he makes it plainly clear that following him is not going to be an easy task. And he does not want to give anybody a false impression.

If you want to follow him, then you must know exactly what you are committing yourself to. He wants us to review the situation before we take a step towards following him.

Sometimes we give the false notion that once we become Christians, life would be easy and cozy. But that is really not so.

[2 : 2 3] If the devil did not leave our Lord alone, then he is not going to leave us alone either. So if we, at a time in our Christian life, we realize that the evil one has left us alone, then it may be that that is the time we need to review our commitment to Christ.

For here in this text, he makes it clear that following him is not going to be easy. It is a daily struggle. Daily, you have to take up your cross.

It is important that he puts here that you take up your cross daily and follow him. It is not once in a lifetime that you as a Christian should take your cross and follow the Lord.

No, but it is a daily thing. Take up your cross daily and follow me. How do we understand this text?

In order to understand it, we need to put it in its context. That is, and to do this, we need to go back to the beginning of the chapter.

[3 : 3 9] In the beginning of the chapter, we read how our Lord sent his disciples out on an evangelical mission. They returned, having done a lot of mighty works in his name.

On their return, he withdrew with them to a desert near Bethsaida. The crowds followed them, and he fed a crowd of 5,000 men.

After this, when he was alone with his disciples, he asked them, what do people think of me? That led to Peter's confession that he is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Now, up to this point, that is, up to the point that Peter confessed that Christ was the Messiah, up to that point, the disciples could have been following him as they would have followed any other Jewish teacher, because it was the practice for students to follow a teacher and to learn from him.

But here, right after the confession, in line with what Peter had just confessed, our Lord tells them that he is a unique kind of Jewish teacher.

[5 : 03] He is, in fact, the Messiah. But he is, again, a peculiar Messiah, different from the ordinary thoughts of the people. He is the Messiah who will not be hailed by the scribes and the religious leaders of the day, but he is that Messiah who will be rejected by the scribes and the religious leaders, will be killed by them, and on the third day, rise again.

Now, having then taught his disciples what kind of Messiah he is, what kind of person he is as their Savior, having made them to understand the kind of person they were following, he then turns to, to the crowds again.

He now turns to any other person who would have that time become a follower of Jesus Christ. and he turns to the crowd in this verse, verse 23, and he says to all of them, that is, that what, whoever would follow me, certain things are required of you.

That is, now that at least his disciples have discovered the kind of person that he is, in this verse he lays down certain principles for those who want to follow him as their Lord and their God.

It seems to me that our Lord saying here, follow me, the term follow me is used in a unique sense. In the Old Testament in some passages it is used to mean not just follow a human being, follow an ordinary human being, but rather to follow a deity, to follow God.

[7 : 06] So our Lord is here telling his would-be disciples that they should follow him in the sense in which somebody would follow a God and obey that God.

That means not only we should follow him and worship him, but also we should dedicate ourselves to him. but to follow him in this sense he says we have to be prepared to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him.

What do this mean? What does it mean to deny yourself? we may get an idea of what it means to deny yourself if we read Luke 14 26.

There he says, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his fellow, does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Now, in this text it says, if you do not hate even your own life, your members of your family, then you cannot be my disciple.

[8 : 42] Hate here, as Howard Marshall explains, does not mean, in the English sense, to dislike. It does not mean to dislike your own life.

It does not mean to dislike members of your family in order to become a Christian. What it means is, in the Jewish sense, to love less.

That is, as compared with Jesus Christ, any other thing in the world must have to take a secondary place. You love everything else, but that love is secondary compared to your love for Jesus Christ.

That is, we should be so totally committed to him in every respect of our lives. That is what it means to be born again, to be committed, to be fully committed to Jesus Christ, to make him the controlling factor of your life, to live as if we, as individuals, no longer matter.

It is Jesus who matters for every moment of our lives. We should not even let our parents, our wives, our relatives, or any other thing stand in between us and Christ.

[10 : 14] This does not mean that we should not love members of our family. We are required by the Bible to love and supply for the needs of our family.

But what our Lord means here is that we should be so committed to him and his ways to such an extent that we would love Christ more than this.

honestly, this could be a very difficult demand to the people that our Lord was speaking and to some of us today.

In some families, you need real commitment to Christ to be able to disregard the wishes in the interest of the service of Christ, to ignore the wishes of the family, could be very, very difficult for some people.

It may have been even more so for the people to whom our Lord was addressing his first audience. Because for the Asians, the family ties were very strong.

[11 : 28] To deny oneself in this sense could have been really very demanding. to them, the family unit was so strong that to break it was not only difficult but could be dangerous.

But it may be that in our case, in your particular case, what stands between you and Jesus Christ, what stands between you and total commitment to Jesus Christ, is not any member of your family at all.

It is not a friend or a lover that may stand between you and your dedication to Christ. In your case, it may be your love for wealth, it may be your love for money, it may be your job, it may be a habit that you have developed, or it may be a particular sin in your life which you are very much aware of, but which you have not given up.

Today, money seems to determine everything, the protection and the comfort that the ancient people enjoyed through the family, family ties, we can now get them through money.

Hence, money is so central in our thinking. Without this, there is virtually nothing that we can do. But this can lead us to an unhealthy end for it, resulting in the love of money, which St.

[13 : 18] Paul described as the root of all evil. money is to people. There are cases of people who have gathered it so much around themselves, yet they are surrounded by people who are struggling for their existence.

In such a case, Christ may be so shifted to the corner that money becomes the controlling factor of your life. money.

Let us be clear of this. It is not the amount of money that we have, it is not the quantity that we have, that is the problem. The problem is our attitude to it.

We could be poor, yet love money. We may so yearn for it that Christ becomes secondary in our life. We put its acquisition first in our lives and we look for ways and means of acquiring it and we will not let Christ stand between us and our attempts to acquire it.

Thirdly, to deny yourself in your case may not have anything to do with any member of your family. It may not have anything to do with your attitude to money.

[14 : 49] Your attitude to your family may be perfect. Your attitude to your money may be perfect. But it may have to be, it may have something to do with your job, your attitude to your job.

Since the reformation, the Protestant Church has always emphasized exercise, that Christians have got to work hard.

We must work hard because the Bible requires us to do so. And in fact, some people say that the economic progress of Europe and America is largely due to the Protestant ethic of work.

Since the reformation, the Protestant ethic of work that has come into these parts of the world has been such that it is the thing that has contributed to the economic progress of these countries.

Because these countries largely were Christian and Protestant and they took their God serious and also took their work serious. But we could carry that to an extreme extent.

[16 : 08] we could carry that ethic of work to such an extent that anything else in our life becomes secondary. Christ himself will then recede to a secondary position.

I remember a friend's wife once complained to me that she is very secondary in her husband's life. What is important to him is his studies and how he is going to change the world with his ideas.

Now, in such a situation, it's very easy. Not that we are seeking, just seeking to change the world with our ideas. Not that it is wrong for anyone to seek to change the world with his ideas.

But to be so dedicated to our attempts to change that Christ is pushed out of the corner. Sometimes, also, we make the mistake of thinking that our work should not stand between us and Christ.

To say that our work should not stand between us and Christ means we should resign our job and become ministers or we should do something dramatic in the name of Christianity.

[17 : 33] But that may not be so at all. In your case, for your work standing between you and Christ, it may mean just a little more time for yourself and prayer and a little more time for meditation on the word of God.

In another's case, it may mean rededicating that very job of his or hers to the Lord Jesus Christ and doing the job as somebody who is doing it to please Jesus Christ, as somebody who is doing it as a Christian duty.

So in somebody's case, it's just a question of rededication. But as long as you do not rededicate, you begin to look at it from a wrong angle and even Christ becomes secondary.

Also, to deny yourself may mean your attitude to a habit which I said earlier on, which you may have developed, a habit or a particular sin in your life which you know about but which you've not been able to do anything about.

You know that this habit or this sin continues to stand between you and your full dedication to the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet you hang on to it.

[19 : 16] In such a case, our Lord is speaking to us to deny ourselves. that thing may be dear to you, that whatever is dear to you and stands between you and him, that thing you must let go.

I heard an illustration of how in some Asian countries, farmers or people trap monkeys.

The monkey trap is so set up that it consists of a small hole, small enough for the stretched arm of the monkey to go in, to go through.

And they put a fruit that the monkey loves very much under the hole. The monkey is able to stretch his hand and go in and grip the fruit.

But once it gets hold of the fruit and grips it tightly, it cannot get its hand out again. It sits there pulling the hand, but it can't go.

[20 : 30] The only way the monkey can set itself free is to let go the fruit. But the monkey will not let go the fruit. And it sits there until the farmer or the one who has set up the trap comes around to kill it.

this may sound a bit ridiculous and funny, but to some extent that is how we behave. When we hang on to something which we know is standing between us and our Lord Jesus Christ, something we ourselves are convinced that it stands between us and our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are not prepared to let go of that thing.

You may know it in your life, yet you are not prepared to let go. Are you prepared to let everything go that Christ may rule in your life, or you are prepared to hang on until you die in your sin?

but denying ourselves is not that all that Christ requires of us.

He says too, that once you have denied yourself, you should take up your cross daily and follow him. Take up your cross.

[22 : 04] This did not need, take up your cross, did not need any explanation, to the people our Lord Jesus Christ was preaching to. They were all used to see men, condemned criminals, carrying their crosses to the place of crucifixion.

If you were condemned to die by crucifixion, you carried your cross to the place where you were going to be killed, and there you would have been killed.

So the people he was talking to straight away knew what he was talking about. What Jesus is saying here is that in our context is that any would-be disciple of his should take the position of a condemned man.

It means following him does not imply only self-denial, as we have explained earlier, but it means a new attitude to life.

Not just a new attitude to the family, not just a new attitude to money, not just a new attitude to wealth, not just a new attitude to the habit we had, but a whole new attitude to life.

[23 : 30] To follow him, you should consider yourself ready for death. You should take the attitude of a man who knows he is on his way to death.

In the first instance, that saying, take up your cross, could refer to the persecutions that the Christians had in the early church. even before the emperor Nero came in, who was so bitter in his persecution of the Christians, Christians were already being persecuted all over.

So here, our Lord tells his disciples that following him is not milk and honey. To follow him, you must take stock of what is in life for you.

today, except for a few places, people are not being killed just because they belong to the church, just because they are Christians.

You may meet difficulties because you are a dedicated Christian, but they will not openly kill you because you belong to Christ. So the second meaning of taking up your cross may be more appropriate.

[24 : 49] And that is that to take up your cross implies that we should be dead to sin. To be dead to sin is to truly belong to Christ.

It means to wake up each morning and make yourself aware that for this particular day, you are going to live a life for Christ.

you are going to live the day as sin has no place in your life. This does not mean that you will not face temptation in that particular day.

No, by no means. It means that for each day you rededicate yourself to the Lord. And the more you live in tune with Christ, the more the evil one will fight you.

He will not attack you on an open front. You remember how our Lord himself was tempted. The Lord went into the desert to be tempted of the evil one.

[26 : 00] The evil one knew he was there for that purpose. He did not attack our Lord straight away, but he waited until he had fasted and was hungry.

Then he approached him gently through the flesh. saying, you are very hungry. Look at these stones. You've got the power to turn them into bread.

Why not do it? What prevents you from doing it? This is the subtle method he took to tempt our Lord. And if he did not leave our Lord alone, he will not leave us alone.

it sounds so convincing, but the Lord straight away knew what he was about. So, our Lord is telling his disciples and his would-be disciples that we should take the attitude of somebody who is dead to sin.

and to be dead to sin also means that the evil one will take various means and methods of tempting us.

[27 : 13] but he again commands us to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. Thus, to take up your cross is to be aware of sin in whatever form it presents itself.

That means things may not be very comfortable for you because as you know and as I know, in the world today, we are surrounded by people who do not have second thoughts about sin, who do not care about sin.

And to live a life of non-compromise with sin means a bit of difficulty or a lot of difficulty here and there.

I saw a TV program some time ago. I saw the program in the middle of it and it was about a man who had become a Christian and on becoming a Christian, he realized that there were certain things he was doing with his local union which he could no longer do and he met, his fellow workers met with him and their complaint was that they could not understand this man because there were a lot of Methodist lay preachers in the union.

So if Methodist lay preachers belong to our union, our union must be doing all right. It must be all right. It must be doing the right thing. But what is important is the answer that this man gave.

[29 : 03] He said Christianity is a whole. Some people come to it taking bits and pieces. Some people take the comfortable parts.

They take the palatable parts of it. But I intend to take the whole of it. The bitter parts as well as the comfortable parts.

The difficult parts as well as the nice parts. parts. I feel this is what our Lord is requiring of us in this text.

Because when we read the New Testament we find that although Christianity is a life of comfort and of ease because we belong to Christ, it can at the same time be a life of struggle as our Lord is making clear in this passage.

It is a life of struggle against the evil one. It is a life of difficulties. And he wants us to be aware of this in this verse.

[30 : 14] He who comes to me must take up his cross daily and follow me. So he calls upon you to weigh the pros and cons before you come to follow him.

So like the monkey as we saw earlier on, are we prepared to let go the fruit? Are we prepared to review our lives in the light of what Christ offers?

Or we are prepared to hang on to what we are used to, to what is comfortable? Are we prepared to take the faith to its extremities, to its difficulties, with all its difficulties, and with all its enjoyments?

Or we are prepared to take bits and pieces, the bits that are enjoyable, the pieces that are comfortable? May he himself give us the courage and the understanding to be able to commit ourselves to him fully and completely.

Amen. Amen. Let us pray. Lord our God, we thank you for your word to us this morning.

[31 : 54] We thank you, Father, that belonging to you is not always milk and honey. It is not always ease and comfort.

But it is a life of dedication, a life of awareness of sin, and a life of constant fight against the attacks of the devil.

We thank you, Father, that despite this, you yourself promise that whatever struggle and whatever success we come to, you are with us, making the fight easier, and turning our own fight into your fight so that the little that we do becomes a great success because you are in fact doing it in us.

We thank you for this. We pray that you know our hearts, you know our personal relationship with you, and whatever our problem is, whatever it is that is so dear to us that prevents us from coming to you, we pray, Father, that you will help us to let go that sin and put you in your right place in our lives.

This is our prayer for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 30] Amen. We shall continue by singing Psalm 62. 62 again. This time we shall sing verses 7 to 12. When I read this Psalm, I realized that it balances our sermon very much.

In the sermon, the emphasis was on us taking the initiative. And one may wonder whether we're really doing it. this psalm this psalm balances out that attitude.

It balances out that it is not in fact we who are taking the initiative, but Christ is, God himself is taking the initiative with us. God is our rock and our defense.

He is on our side and he is doing the job with us. Psalm 62 verses 7 to 12. In God, my glory place is and my salvation sure.

In God, the rock is of my strength, my refuge most secure. Psalm 62 verses 7 to 12 to the tune Glasgow number 66.

[34 : 47] ta■ and my salvation is shared lives and life aroma in the stream and life and life is all The Lord is all I said, my record was sicker.

Keep the place your confidence in Him personally.

If all the glory of your God, God is a brand new life.

Cure weep in heaven, I'm not in me.

And with heaven alive, in heaven's sake, I'm not in me.

[36 : 52] But we must be in the creation, in the living of heaven.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS To his work Rewardeth Every one There are the announcements for the day.

The evening service is at half past six and it will be taken by Henry Lazenby. It is preceded by a prayer meeting in the session room at six o'clock.

[39 : 22] The midweek meeting for prayer and Bible study is on Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. The Boys Club resumes on Thursday evening at 6.30.

The Finance Committee meets on Friday evening at 7.30. It is suspected that the services next Lord's Day will be taken by the Reverend Alex MacDonald, Bishop Riggs.

The September issue of the newsletter is available today. Please take a copy as you leave. The September issues of the instructor and the Evangelical Times are also available.

Some Evangelical Times subscriptions for this year are apparently still unpaid. Those uncertain about whether or not they have paid their subscription should contact Ian MacLeod.

A meeting under the auspices of the Blitzwood Tract Society will be held in the Skin Street Church on Thursday, 14 September at 7.30 p.m.

[40 : 34] when an ex-priest of the Roman Catholic Church will talk about the gospel work in Italy. Leaflets giving full details are available on the vegetable table.

On Thursday, the Senior Citizens Fellowship meets in the session room at 2 p.m. So, benediction.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore.

Amen.