

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"Deny thyself take up thy cross, and follow Me." –Mark 8:34

To many, this seems a hard saying. But it will be much harder to hear that last sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41). They that willingly follow Jesus, and conform themselves to His death, need not fear that sentence. They shall draw near to Christ the Judge with confidence and joy. Why then do you fear to take up the cross, which leads you to a kingdom? In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from your enemies; in the cross is heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength; in the cross is the height of virtue, the perfection of holiness. There is no salvation, or hope of everlasting life, but in the cross. Take up your cross, then, and follow Jesus, and you shall find rest. If you die with Him, you shall also live with Him; if you be a partaker of His sufferings, you shall be a partaker of His glory. There is no other way to life and peace, but the way of the cross, or of daily mortification. Go where you will, you shall not find a higher way above, nor a safer way beneath, than the way of the holy cross.

You must suffer either willingly, or against your will. A cross always attends you. You cannot escape it; for whichever way you go, you carry yourself with you. Turn upward or downward, outward or inward; still you shall find the cross. If you bear it willingly, it will bear you, and lead you to your desired end. If you bear it unwillingly, you contrive a burden to yourself, and increase your load; and yet you must bear it. Do you think to escape the cross? Which of the saints escaped it? Even Christ Jesus our Lord was never without pain or suffering, so long as He lived. His whole life was a cross and martyrdom. And do you seek rest on earth?

It is not according to a man's inclination to bear the cross—to subdue the body, to shun honors, to suffer reproach and poverty, to bear willingly, to be despised, and to despise one's self, and not to court worldly prosperity. If you look upon yourself, you shall not be able to do this. But if you trust in the Lord, you shall receive strength from heaven, and the world and flesh shall be made subject to you.

Set yourself therefore to bear manfully the cross of your Lord, who was crucified for the love of you. Prepare yourself to suffer inconveniences and adversities in this miserable life. Drink of the cup of your Lord heartily, if you' desire to be His friend, and to have part with Him. As for comfort, leave that to God. Let Him do as He sees to be best. But set yourself to bear troubles,

and account them blessings. When you are come to this, that suffering for Christ's sake is pleasant to you, you have found a paradise upon earth. Oh, that you would count it joy to bear affliction for Christ! What glory would await you! What joy would it be to the saints! If there had been anything better for the children of God, than bearing adversity, surely Christ would have shown it by His example or His word. Let this then be the final conclusion, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

--Author unknown

For further reading, the following works are recommended: By Way of the Cross by W. M. Ojala, Compiler (Contains: The Necessary and Daily Cross and Suffering of True Christians by Nils Grubb); The Blood of the Cross by Horatius Bonar; Come to Jesus! by Newman Hall; The Marks of True Repentance and Saving Faith by Jonathan Dickinson; A Sermon of Repentance by Arthur Dent; The Fiery Trial by John Rusk; and Sufferings and Consolations by John Rusk.