

SERMON NOTES -- The Cross-Shaped Life: The Narrow Door

Dr. David Renwick

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Matthew 7:13-14; 16:21-28;

Tacitus, *Annals* 15

Nero fastened the guilt (for the great fire of Rome) . . . on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. *Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.*

Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna – c. AD160

Burned at the stake for refusing to burn incense to the Emperor

"Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong." How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior? I bless you, Father, for judging me worthy of this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs **I may share the cup of Christ** (= his cross & suffering) ”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Cost of Discipleship*

The cross is laid down on every Christian. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death. We give ourselves over to death. This it begins. The cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. ***When Christ calls a person, he bids that person come and die.***

J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (p.44)

Many who drop out of missionary work do so not because they are ***not*** sufficiently gifted, but because there are large areas of their lives which have never been brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. They shirk the rigors and sacrifices and the divine disciplines that are involved.

CENTRALITY OF THE CROSS

1 Corinthians 1.17-18, 22-23, 2:2

1:¹⁷Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel -- and not with eloquent wisdom, *so that . . . the cross of Christ* might not be emptied of its power. For *the message about the cross* is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

²²For Jews demand signs and other races desire wisdom, but we proclaim *Christ crucified*, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

2:2 I decided *to know nothing* among you except Jesus Christ, *and him crucified.*

The 4 Gospels' Emphasis on the "Last Week of Jesus' Life"

Matthew -- 1/3 ; Mark -- 1/3; Luke -- 1/4; (barely 1/3 of the way in, *Jesus sets his face towards his death in Jerusalem*; John -- 1/2 of the story

HARD TEACHINGS

Matthew 16:24

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves **and take up their cross [daily]** and follow me.

Luke 14:27

Whoever does not **carry the cross** and follow me **cannot be my disciple**

Matthew 7:13-13

¹³“**Enter through the narrow gate**; For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it.

GENTLE TEACHINGS

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, ***all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens***, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ***For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.***”

John 3:16 – Broad Words

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, ***so that everyone who*** (“whosever”) ***believes in him*** may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷God ***did not*** send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Romans 5 – Loving Words for the unworthy:

⁶While we were still weak, at the right time ***Christ died for the ungodly.***

⁸***God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*** ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood (death on the cross), will we be saved through him from the wrath of God

I. ULTIMATE ALLEGIANCE. . .

Galatians (2:20)

I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives within me.

- A fundamental putting to death of the control of our lives . .
- And a deliberate handing over control to God made known in Jesus
→ We're in charge OR He is

II. SELF-DISCIPLINE & OUR DAILY MORAL CHOICES

Colossians 3:5, 8-10

⁵**Put to death**, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁸Get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, . . . seeing that you have **stripped off the old self** with its practices ¹⁰and have **clothed yourselves with the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

This has to do with **a regular taking stock of our lives**

- **Every week** – to be with Jesus' team (the church) in worship & service
- **& Every day** -- to set time aside specific time: as if we were with Jesus in Gethsemane . .