

## Matthew 16:21-28

*21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that 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.*

*22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

*23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

*24 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.*

*25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

*26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*

*28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

从此耶稣才指示门徒，他必须上耶路撒冷去，受长老祭司长文士许多的苦，并且被杀，第三日复活。

彼得就拉着他，劝他说，主阿，万不可如此，这事必不临到你身上。

耶稣转过来，对彼得说，撒但退我后边去吧。你是绊我脚的。因为你不体贴神的意思，只体贴人的意思。

于是耶稣对门徒说，若有人要跟从我，就当舍己，背起他的十字架，来跟从我。

因为凡要救自己生命的，（生命或作灵魂下同）必丧掉生命。凡为我丧掉生命的，必得着生命。

人若赚得全世界，赔上自己的生命，有什么益处呢？人还能拿什么换生命呢？

人子要在他父的荣耀里，同着众使者降临。那时候，他要照各人的行为报应各人。

我实在告诉你们，站在这里的，有人在没尝死味以前，必看见人子降临在他的国里。

I thought we'd just look for a short time at this passage in Matthew 16. I'm not going to go through it verse by verse, I really just want to have a closer look at verse 24:

*24 If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

于是耶稣对门徒说，若有人要跟从我，就当舍己，背起他的十字架，来跟从我。

I read the verses either side of this, just to put the verse in its context more than anything else. We should never take verses out of context.

Peter had just made his great confession of Christ in v.16: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* And Christ commended him for this because *“flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”*

But not so long afterwards, in v.21, Christ told the disciples for the first time what was going to happen to Him:

*21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that 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.*

从此耶稣才指示门徒，他必须上耶路撒冷去，受长老祭司长文士许多的苦，并且被杀，第三日复活。

This took Peter by surprise and he began to rebuke Christ in v.22:

*22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

彼得就拉着他，劝他说，主阿，万不可如此，这事必不临到你身上。

That wasn't the world's way of doing things. To the world, that was defeatist talk. Suffering, giving in to the authorities and being killed – these are all negative things to the world, things that the world counts as weakness. So Peter objected. Of course, Peter didn't notice that Christ also mentioned that He'd be raised the third day, which is a positive thing in anybody's eyes. It's amazing how we only hear what we want to hear, what stands out for us, rather than taking in everything that's said. Peter's mind just got stuck on the suffering and being killed part of what Christ said, which was the thing that shocked him. He spoke instinctively from his own natural heart, and started rebuking Christ for what He'd said. How can suffering and dying be a victory? How can that do any good at all? Suffering and being killed is just defeat. With his worldly heart, these are the lines along which he must have been thinking.

Christ rebukes Peter rather sharply for having this attitude:

*23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

耶稣转过来，对彼得说，撒但退我后边去吧。你是绊我脚的。因为你不体贴神的意思，只体贴人的意思。

We've got here a complete contrast between the things that are of God and the things that are of men. Men's ways are completely different from God's ways.

Isaiah 55:8

*"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."*

耶和华说，我的意念，非同你们的意念，我的道路，非同你们的道路。

Humanly speaking, suffering and dying is defeat. Fighting and winning is victory. That's how men think. That's the world's way of looking at things. And that's how Peter thought. But Christ was teaching Peter that in reality, exactly the opposite is the case. And He had to rebuke him, telling him his attitude was from Satan, and that it was of men, not of God.

We can learn something from this. Not long ago, Peter gave his confession of Christ being the Son of the living God. And we're told that this can't have been revealed by flesh and blood from his own natural reasoning, but only as a direct revelation from the Father. Yet at the very same time, Peter was still so worldly in his thinking. And that's what we're like. We're Christians. We may have got some very good insights into the things of God, which can only have been revealed to us by the Father. But in many other ways, we're still so worldly in our attitude and actions. That should humble us. We've still got so much to learn:

1 Corinthians 8:2

*And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

若有人以为自己知道什么，按他所当知道的，他仍是不知道。

All of us naturally would have thought the same way as Peter. After all, Christ suffering and dying would be unjust for a start. Christ didn't sin, why should an innocent man be put to death? But then, if we know anything at all about Christianity, we realise that Christ had to die. He came into this world to die. The death of Christ was the only way to give life to His people:

1 Peter 3:18

*"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God"*

因基督也曾一次为罪受苦（受苦有古卷作受死），就是义的代替不义的，为要引我们到神面前。按着肉体说他被治死。按着灵性说他复活了。

2 Corinthians 5:21

*“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

神使那无罪的（无罪原文作不知罪），替我们成为罪。好叫我们在他里面成为神的义。

Christ had to suffer and die for His people in their place, because they couldn't save themselves from their own sinful nature. That was the only way possible for them to be reconciled to God. Muslims talk so much about Allah being “all-forgiving,” but what they mean is that Allah just lets people off. This idea of God just letting people off is totally against any concept of justice.

God can't just “let people off.” For anyone to be saved from the just punishment for their sin, their sin has still got to be punished somehow, either in themselves, or in somebody else. And that's why Christ came to die – so that the punishment due to His people would be taken upon Himself instead.

So firstly, we see that that was the way Christ had to go. There was no alternative, otherwise God would not be just.

Romans 3:26

*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

好在今时显明他的义，使人知道他自己为义，也称信耶稣的人为义。

But then we've also got to ask the question: If that was the way Christ had to go, and we by the grace of God have now been saved from our sins through Him, how then should we, His followers, subsequently live our lives? We really need to look into this a bit more, because if we profess to be Christians, then we should now be following the ways of God, and not the ways of men any more.

To this end, after Christ's rebuke of Peter, He came out with the following words:

*24 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.*

于是耶稣对门徒说，若有人要跟从我，就当舍己，背起他的十字架，来跟从我。

This is the way we should all now be living. Living for ourselves is no longer an option. I ask this question to myself as much as anybody else: Have we really even started on this self-sacrificial way of life yet?

If we're to call ourselves followers of Christ, we should be continually doing these three things:

Denying ourselves.  
Taking up our cross.  
Following Christ.

## **Deny self**

In order to truly say we're followers of Christ, we're firstly told here that we should deny ourselves.

That goes against every last natural instinct of our bodies. We naturally want comfort, to pamper ourselves, to please ourselves, or at least to live our lives for our own benefit.

But we're now called to renounce all our own ideas and plans that we might have had for our lives. The way of thinking that says that this life is all about me, should now be at an end, if we truly follow Christ.

Rather, we should be living lives whereby we continually deny ourselves for the sake of others and, more importantly, for the kingdom of God.

But that doesn't mean that there's any virtue in poverty in itself. If God has blessed us with lots of material blessings in this world, then we should be thankful, not despise them and renounce them all. We should of course always be aware that riches in this world can, if we're not careful, lead us to forget God altogether. But there's no virtue in enforced poverty, in deliberately making ourselves poor. So when a monk makes a vow to poverty, chastity and obedience (by which he means obedience to the pope, not to God), then he's getting things completely wrong. There is no inherent virtue in any of these things by themselves.

Neither is there any virtue in deliberately harming ourselves. Some people in past history think they should be constantly beating themselves as a kind of atonement for their sins, but that's not the case either.

Neither is there any virtue in physically trying to get away from people by sitting on top of a pole in silence for 37 years, or living in the desert away from people, or bricking yourself into a little cell with no door. That's what people have done in the past, but none of this is true religion, because even if we did get away from people, we still can't get away from our own sinful hearts.

Colossians 2:23

*Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.*

这些规条，使人徒有智慧之名，用私意崇拜，自表谦卑，苦待己身，其实在克制肉体的情欲上，是毫无功效。

None of this is what it means to deny self. Christ has fully paid for our sins. We should rather live lives of thankfulness to Him for all He's done for us. If He gives us plenty, we should use that plenty to His glory. If He gives us little, we should use that little to His glory. Either way we should be thankful.

Christ denied Himself completely. That led Him eventually even to death on a cross. Now, not all of us are necessarily called to go to a physical cross, but that is the kind of sacrificial life that we're now called to:

Philippians 2:5-8

*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and 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.”*

你们当以基督耶稣的心为心。他本有神的形像，不以自己与神同等为强夺的。反倒虚己，取了奴仆的形像，成为人的样式。既有人的样子，就自己卑微，存心顺服，以至于死，且死在十字架上。

Christ isn't only our Saviour, He's also our example as to how we should live the rest of our lives in this world:

1 Peter 2:21-23

*“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”*

你们蒙召原是为。因基督也为你们受过苦，给你们留下榜样，叫你们跟随他的脚踪行。他并没有犯罪，口里也没有诡诈。他被骂不还口。受害不说威吓的话。只将自己交托那按公义审判人的主。

We need to recognise that by becoming a Christian, living for ourselves is at an end. The next verses in Matthew 16 tells us this.

***25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.***

**因为凡要救自己生命的，（生命或作灵魂下同）必丧掉生命。凡为我丧掉生命的，必得着生命。**

*26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

人若赚得全世界，赔上自己的生命，有什么益处呢？人还能拿什么换生命呢？

Our treasure should now be in heaven, not in this world:

Matthew 6:19-21

*“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

不要为自己积攒财宝在地上，地上有虫子咬，能锈坏，也有贼挖窟窿来偷。只要积攒财宝在天上，天上没有虫子咬，不能锈坏，也没有贼挖窟窿来偷。因为你的财宝在哪里，你的心也在哪里。

That's what it means to deny self.

Romans 8:13

*“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”*

你们若顺从肉体活着必要死。若靠着圣灵治死身体的恶行必要活着。

### **Take up our cross**

Secondly, we're called to take up our cross. Christ had a real cross to bear. His sufferings were unique. We must be so thankful that we don't have to take up a cross like His. Not only did He physically die on a cross, but His whole life was one of suffering for righteousness sake, and then on top of all that, He willingly took upon Himself the sins of all His people, so that they wouldn't have to take them upon themselves. We can't truly enter in to any of these sufferings of Christ at all. And praise God we don't have to. He did all this for us.

Christ's was the ultimate example of self-sacrifice. But in our lives, we all have our own daily burdens to deal with. God, in His providence, has placed all of us in unique and different situations. Because of sin in the world, all these situations will be burdensome.

John 16:33

*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

在世上你们有苦难。但你们可以放心，我已经胜了世界。

Maybe you've got an elderly relative to constantly look after, or a wayward alcoholic son, or a debilitating illness. Everybody's got their own "crosses" to bear, and that's what we are called to do – bear them daily.

We may think our problems are overwhelming and we can't cope, but as Christians, we've got the living God to communicate with. We don't just have a dead religion like Buddhism or Islam or Roman Catholicism, where what they call "prayer" is just reciting words. We are in communion with the living God, Lord of heaven and earth, who is the hearer and answerer of all our prayers. He'll help us when things seem impossible:

Matthew 19:26

*"With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."*

耶稣看着他们说，在人这是不能的。在神凡事都能。

Now, there are people today who think that being a Christian is about having overcome all our problems and living the victory life. No more problems, Jesus came to take them all away, so we can now live a victorious life to the full. So, many modern churches tell people that they shouldn't think about sin any more. After all, Christ has taken our sins away on the cross. Just think positive thoughts about yourself. That's not Christianity. That's nothing more than humanistic philosophy creeping into the church.

It's not reality. Life in this fallen world is difficult. When we become a Christian, our situation doesn't change. But we now have the Lord with us to help, to comfort and to guide us through the difficulties of life. The difficulties don't go away now we have become a Christian. We do still have a cross. But we are called to take up our cross daily (Luke's account), and if we have a close walk with Christ, our crosses then become bearable.

The apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh, which he asked three times for the Lord to remove, but the Lord didn't remove it, rather He told Paul:

2 Corinthians 12:9

*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*

他对我说，我的恩典够你用的。因为我的能力，是在人的软弱上显得完全。

## **Follow me**

Thirdly, we're called to follow Christ. At first glance, this might look like a redundant phrase, the passage seems to be saying, "*If any man will come after me, .... let him follow me.*" Well, yes, that's obvious!

But we need to be constantly reminded of this. Our own hearts so easily lead us astray. Many people think they're following Christ, and they're not. They're following a false representation of Christ set up in their own little minds. That could have come directly from their own minds, but it could also have come from something they've read, someone they've listened to or some peculiar teaching in a church they've been to.

We must make sure that the Christ we follow is the true one. And there's only one way we can do that. We must stick close to the Holy Scriptures. This is the only accurate record we've got of what Christ was really like, what He taught, how He fulfilled the prophecies and so on. This book is the inspired Word of God. Everything else, all other books, are the words of men. That doesn't necessarily make them wrong, but it does mean that they at least may contain some mistakes in them. This book, the Bible, doesn't contain any mistakes at all, because it is the Word of God and He's kept it free from error. Keep close to this book, and the Christ of this book, and we won't go far wrong.

## **Impossibility**

Now we've looked at the life that Christ wants us to live, and we can only come to one conclusion: it's impossible.

By nature, we not only sin, but we're born with selfish desires, which seek only for the preservation and pleasure of self. As long as we're enslaved to our natural instincts, we'll find it impossible to do any of these three things.

Hebrews 11:6

*"But without faith it is impossible to please him."*

人非有信就不能得神的喜悦。

Before we even attempt to follow Christ at all, we've got to see our inability to be able to do that. All of us desperately need a fundamental change of heart, within ourselves. We must be changed. We must become new creatures. We must have a new heart put within us. Otherwise it's impossible to live the Christian life.

John 3:3

*"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

人若不重生，就不能见神的国。

Are we tired yet of living for ourselves yet? There's two problems with living for ourselves:

Firstly, it's pointless. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived apart from Christ, said about life under the sun:

Ecclesiastes 1:14

*I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

我见日光之下所作的一切事，都是虚空，都是捕风。

Do we really want to live for something temporal, which will soon be gone forever? Or would we not rather live for eternal things, things that'll last? Go to a graveyard. All those people when they were alive probably thought that they and their own little lives were so important. But now they're all forgotten. If all we have is this world, life under the sun is utterly meaningless.

Secondly, the world's ways are evil.

Christ said:

John 7:7

*"The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil."*

世人不能恨你们，却是恨我。因为我指证他们所作的事是恶的

Everything about the world and its ways are vanity and evil. There is nothing good at all in it.

Psalms 14:3

*There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

并没有行善的，连一个也没有。

The one thing all of us need more than anything else is a new heart. And that's what God offers to every one of us.

How do we receive a new heart, this fundamental change? And the answer is.... ask Him.

Matthew 7:7

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

你们祈求，就给你们。寻找，就寻见。叩门，就给你们开门。

Cry to God for mercy. He is a merciful God, He is a hearer of genuine prayer.

John 6:37

*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

到我这里来的，我总不丢弃他。

We must cry to Him until we're sure we've received this new heart. Not only will we be saved from the judgment to come, but our new heart now gives us the ability to at least begin to follow Christ in this way of self-denial.

It's a way completely opposite from the way of the world. The world will persecute us, laugh at us and maybe even kill us. It'll certainly be a harder life than it would have been just drifting along with everybody else. But it's the only way that's right. It's the only way that'll keep us from our sin and the consequences of it. And our job as Christians is to live this life, and be a witness to others of it.