

Matthew 16:24

Read Matthew 16:13-28

I thought we'd just look for a short time at this passage in Matthew 16. I really just want to concentrate on verse 24, but we'll look at 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.

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

[13] 耶稣到了该撒利亚腓立比的境内，就问门徒说：人说我（有古卷没有我字）人子是谁？

Jesus asks His disciples who men think He is. He's been going around teaching and, more to the point, performing miracles, and He's attracted a large following. In His teaching He's been telling His listeners who He is, but they obviously weren't listening.

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

[14] 他们说：有人说是施洗的约翰；有人说是以利亚；又有人说是耶利米或是先知里的一位。

They all had their own theories as to who He was. We need to have our ears opened to what He actually had to say, not just decide for ourselves who we think He was.

All of these ideas as to who He was have one thing in common - they're all dead men come back to life again. So they don't have much of a problem with the resurrection from the dead, when it suits them. When someone did actually return from the dead, it was a different matter. Christ said:

Luke 16:31

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

若不听从摩西和先知的話，就是有一个从死里复活的，他们也是不听劝。

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? [15] 耶稣说：你们说我是谁？

Christ tells them, it doesn't matter what others think, what do you think? Think for yourselves, personally. We've got to understand we should never blindly follow men or movements. We must ask ourselves as individuals who we think Christ is. Our life depends on it. And Simon Peter gives Him the correct answer:

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[16] 西门彼得回答说：你是基督，是永生神的儿子。

This is Peter's great confession of Christ. And it's this confession of Christ that is the rock upon which we as the church stands:

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church;

[18] 我还告诉你，你是彼得，我要把我的教会建造在这磐石上；

1 John 4:15

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

[15] 凡认耶稣为神儿子的，神就住在他里面，他也住在神里面。

1 John 5:12

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

[12] 人有了神的儿子就有生命，没有神的儿子就没有生命。

And we're told:

and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

阴间的权柄（原文是门），不能胜过他。

Christ is going to build His church and nobody and nothing can stop that. Christ said:

John 6:39

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

差我来者的意思就是：他所赐给我的，叫我一个也不失落，在末日却叫他复活。

Christ is going to build His church. Not one will be lost. It's in the light of those facts that we must read the next verse:

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

[19] 我要把天国的钥匙给你，凡你在地上所捆绑的，在天上也要捆绑；凡你在地上所释放的，在天上也要释放。

Many people think this means that men, the church, the powers that be in the church, have the keys to the kingdom of heaven, the real power to let people into heaven, and keep people out. That's the view of the Roman Catholic Church amongst others. They really think they are the one true church and Salvation can't be found outside of themselves. But whatever this verse is teaching, it can't be saying that, because the previous verse makes it clear that Christ is in charge of who gets into heaven and who doesn't. Christ is the one building the church, not men. This verse speaks of the

importance of decision making in the church after Christ and the apostles have gone from this earth and we're left only with the two witnesses God has given us, the Bible and the Holy Spirit. It certainly doesn't give men power to shut heaven up to anyone they choose. If you're in a church like that, it's a sect, not a church. Get out!

Now back to v.17. After Peter's great confession, Christ commends Him:

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

[17] 耶稣对他说：西门巴约拿，你是有福的！因为这不是属血肉的指示你的，乃是我在天上的父指示的。

Only the Father could have revealed this to Peter. He wasn't blindly following anybody, and just parroting what his church taught, he'd come to this conclusion himself. Nobody, without supernatural revelation from the Father, can come to this conclusion. This means that Peter had a living relationship with the Father. The Father was revealing things to him personally. That's the sort of relationship every one of us should want. By nature we don't have it. We should ask that the Father might reveal Himself to us.

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

[20] 当下，耶稣嘱咐门徒，不可对人说他是基督。

That was not the right time for the disciples to reveal this information to the world yet. The miracles Jesus performed proved He was from the Father. But there was some important information the disciples needed to know first, before they could preach this themselves.

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.

[21] 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。

He **must** go to Jerusalem and have these things happen to Him. He had to die, to make atonement for the sins of all those who would come to Him. But the disciples wouldn't understand this yet. It's against our natural idea of what a great leader should be like.

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

[22] 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。

Peter certainly couldn't deal with it. Suffering, giving in to the authorities and being killed – these are all things the world counts as weakness and defeat. So Peter objected. Peter didn't notice that Christ also mentioned He'd be raised the third day, which was where the victory came. 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. 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 thought. Christ strongly rebukes him:

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.

[23] 耶稣转过来，对彼得说：撒但，退我後边去罢！你是绊我脚的；因为你体贴神的意思，只体贴人的意思。

We've got two completely opposite philosophies here, the things of God, and the things 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.

耶和華說，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 how Peter thought. But Christ was teaching Peter that in reality, exactly the opposite is the case. A few minutes before, Peter gave his confession of Christ being the Son of the living God. And we're told this can't have been revealed by flesh and blood from his own natural reasoning, but only as a direct revelation from God. Yet at the same time, Peter was still so worldly in his thinking. And that's what we're like. We're Christians. We may have been given some great insights into the things of God, that can only have been revealed by the Father. But in many other ways, we're still so worldly in our understanding. 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 think the same way as Peter. 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 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, because we can't save ourselves from our own sinful nature. That was the only way possible for us 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. And that idea is common in Christian circles too. But the 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 the punishment due to His people would be taken upon Himself instead. Christ had to go that way. 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, we should now be following God's ways, not man's ways any more. So after Christ's rebuke of Peter, He said 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.

[24] 於是耶稣对门徒说：若有人要跟从我，就当舍己，背起他的十字架来跟从我。

This is how we should now be living. Living for ourselves is finished with. I ask this question to myself as much as anybody else: Have we 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 say we're followers of Christ, 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. Life is now no longer all about me, if we truly follow Christ. We should rather be living lives whereby we continually deny ourselves for the sake of others and, more importantly, for the kingdom of God.

But men in history got this all wrong. Here are some things denying self doesn't mean:

It doesn't mean that there's any virtue in poverty. 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 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 their virtue in deliberate self-harm. Some thought 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, or living in the desert, or bricking yourself into a little cell with no door. People have done all these things in the past, but none of it is true religion. Even if we could 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 use that plenty to His glory. If He gives us little, we use that little to His glory. Either way we should be thankful, and not use what we have for ourselves, that's the point.

Christ denied Himself completely. That led Him even to death. Not all of us are necessarily called to die like He was, 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 a Saviour, He's also our example as to how we should live our lives:

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. We're told this here:

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

[25] 因为，凡要救自己生命（生命：或作灵魂；下同）的，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?

[26] 人若赚得全世界，赔上自己的生命，有甚麽益处呢？人还能拿甚麽换生命呢？

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

Christ had a real cross to bear. His sufferings were unique. We must be so thankful 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 on top of all that, He willingly took upon Himself the sins of His people, so they wouldn't have to take them upon themselves. We can't truly enter in to any of this. And praise God we don't have to. He did it all for us. Christ was the ultimate example of self-sacrifice.

But in our lives, we all have our own daily burdens to deal with. God has placed all of us in unique and different situations. Because of sin, 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 unique "crosses" to bear, and that's what we're called to do – bear them, and Luke says, 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。

There are people around in churches 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, don't think about sin any more. After all, Christ has taken it all away. Just think positive thoughts about yourself. That's not Christianity. That's humanistic philosophy creeping into the church. More to the point, 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've become a Christian. We do still have a cross. But we're called to take up our cross daily, taking one day at a time, and if we're in 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 seem like a redundant phrase, the passage seems to be saying, "If any man will come after me, let him come after me." Well, yes, that's obvious!

But we need to be constantly reminded of this. Our own hearts easily lead us astray. Many people think they're following Christ, and they're not. They're following a false representation of Christ in their own little minds. That could have come directly from themselves, or it could also have come from something they've read, someone they've heard or some peculiar teaching of a church. We must make sure 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 they at least may contain mistakes. This book, the Bible, contains no 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 wrong.

Impossibility

Now we've looked at the life that Christ wants us to live, we can only come to one conclusion: it's impossible to achieve. 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, we've got to see our inability to do it. Only when we've seen our inability can we see that we 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。

There are many 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 is 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.

Psalm 14:3

There is none that doeth good, no, not one. 并没有行善的，连一个也没有。

As a result of all the evil in the world, there's going to be a judgment:

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.

[27] 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。

Jesus Christ, the Son of man, is going to judge us according to our works. Who can stand? Who can escape the wrath to come? Nobody. We need a Saviour. We need to be changed from the inside, as individuals. We need a new nature. A nature that can at least begin to do good works, a new heart that can know God and communicate with Him.

And that's what God offers to every one of us. How do we receive this new heart, this fundamental change? Ask Him.

Matthew 7:7,8

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

你们祈求，就给你们。寻找，就寻见。叩门，就给你们开门。[8] 因为凡祈求的，就得着；寻找的，就寻见；叩门的，就给他开门。

God 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。

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.

[28] 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。

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 we'll receive the ability to at least begin to follow Christ in this way of self-sacrifice, 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.