

“VICTORY ~ Taking-up YOUR Cross” [4.19.09]

Have you ever been sold a bill of goods? Being told one thing w/great promise BUT receiving something quite the opposite?

- It's happened to me more than once
 - To the best of my recollection, the 1st time it happened was in the summer of 1989. In those days Friday was my day off. That particular day I only had 2 things planned = keeping my 8 month old daughter while Becky was hostessing @ Uncle Bud's Catfish House & nursing my 102-degree fever from walking pneumonia.
 - I had just settled in for my afternoon nap, when the doorbell rang - - it was a nice young man that explained that my wife had signed us up for a free carpet-cleaning demonstration; sounded good - - so I let him in.
 - 1st question he asked was, “Do you own a vacuum cleaner?”
 - I smiled & proudly pulled out our Hoover Deluxe model 200 which we had received when we 1st got married; he smiled & complemented my machine.
 - He asked if I minded to vacuum a small area - - @ this point I was still ‘innocently ignorant’ I assumed he needed it swept before shampooing; Naturally, I was wrong!
 - Then the hatchet fell when he asked if, “I minded him re-vacuuming the area I had just cleaned” with his Kirby turbo powered supersonic cleaning machine w/chrome wheels & leather bag attachment; let me tell you = that was a machine!
 - He placed a cotton tab over the suction mechanism & proceeded to re-vacuum. It pulled up not only dirt but also carpet thread & pad ☺
 - He then asked me, “You don't allow your baby girl on that carpet, do you?” I answered as any self-respecting dad would, “Absolutely not - - we don't let our little angel ever touch the ground; we hold her all day long.”
 - Then he became a salesman & said, “You seem like a nice man - - tell you what I'm going to do, I will sell you my vacuum cleaner for a discounted rate”
 - Without blushing he gave me the price - - that fine machine cost more than my car was worth; it literally would have been 20% of annual income.

A general rule in life is: ‘If something sounds too good to be true, PAY attention!

Not so with Jesus, as a matter of fact, He never once sugar-coated His expectations for us (His followers). Billy Graham explains, “Salvation is free, BUT discipleship will cost everything we have.”

Today's message is about what JESUS EXPECTS from us after we confess Him as Lord & Savior.

I. Cost of Discipleship

A. (R) Luke 9: 18 – 20 or p. 790 in pew Bible = Peter's confession

1. Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?”
 - a. This is the most important question you will ever answer- - how you answer. This question will determine where you spend eternity.
 - b. The Christian faith goes beyond knowing what others believe. It requires a statement of personal belief, a confession of your answer to Jesus' question, “Who do you say I am?”
2. Every true believer will join Peter in this confession of faith that Jesus is Christ = (Messiah sent from God) & I accept Him as Lord & Savior.

- Unfortunately this is where the journey stops for too many believers!
- DANGEROUS = (R) Matthew 7: 21 – 23
- Jesus calls us to a lifestyle & mindset; NOT just a confession!
 - In the next verses He paints a very realistic picture what it will cost Him to secure our salvation & then follows up what it will cost us to follow Him!
 - [INSERT] C.S. Lewis quote

B. (R) Luke 9: 21 – 22 = Jesus foreshadows His death

- 1st time He clearly teaches the Twelve that His role as God's anointed Messiah involves suffering & death.
 - This concept of God's Messiah actually suffering was completely foreign!
 - This was the turning point for the Twelve disciples. Any thought of political gain or selfish ambition was dismissed that day. Being His disciples would cost them much more than anyone ever dreamed!
 - Today Jesus also teaches that we are not exempt from this Rule of Life = "We can't gain a new life without dying to the old one!"

II. Christ-followers are expected to possess = 2 ATTITUDES:

(R) Luke 9: 23

A. 1st attitude = "...YOU must turn from your selfish ways"

1. Selfishness bites hard = it's a constant battle for most of us.
 - [INSERT] story of pancakes ☺
2. Self-denial is not denying ourselves luxuries such as chocolates, cakes, cigarettes & cocktails (may include these things) it goes deeper!
 - a. "To deny oneself is to turn away from idolatry of self-centeredness"
 - b. Biblical self-denial takes shape in many ways;
 - i. For the proud = means renouncing the desire for status & power
 - ii. For the greedy = means repenting of an appetite for wealth
 - iii. For the complacent & lazy = means renouncing the love of ease
 - iv. For the fainthearted = will have to abandon craving for security
 - v. For the violent = means repenting of the desire for revenge
 - vi. For the apathetic = means asking God to restore your love and care for others; this list could go on to your weak area.
3. Constant danger of TRIVIALIZING Christian discipleship
 - a. Sometimes we treat this idea of Christian discipleship as optional; as if we were no more than adding a thin veneer of piety to an otherwise secular life
 - b. Pierce the veneer ~ underneath is the same old pagan; nothing changes
 - c. [INSERT] present day example of self-denial = Tim Tebow

Becoming & BEING a Christ-follower involves a change so radical that no imagery can do it justice except death & resurrection (dying to the old self)

This leads us to the 2nd attitude that is expected from us as Christ-followers!

B. 2nd attitude = “...(YOU must) take up your cross & follow (Jesus)”

- Common-day misunderstandings about taking-up your cross.
 - Taking-up one’s cross is NOT an irritable husband nor a cantankerous wife; it’s not a dreaded disease or misfortune; it’s not a child who is a drug addict nor this economy in recession.
 - Instead it is the symbol of death to the self

Don’t neglect that Jesus died to save you & me from the fires of Hell ~ BUT He did not die to save us from the cross.

- If we had lived in Roman-occupied Palestine [Israel] in those days & if we had seen a man carrying a crossbar or pa-ti-bulum, we would not have needed to run up to him & ask, “Excuse me, but what on earth are you doing?”
 - No, we would have recognized him @ once as a condemned criminal on his way to execution; because Romans made their prisoners carry their own cross to the place of crucifixion.
 - This is the imagery that Jesus chose to illustrate the meaning of discipleship ~ literally He bid us, come & die!

- [INSERT] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

Jesus EXPECTS us to be willing to join the rank & file of the despised & doomed = Quite a sugar-coated offer Jesus makes to us☺

Jesus gave His life for me, in order to take my life from me, so He live His life through me.

So, how are you progressing in your Christian-walk of discipleship?
Battle to DIE to self & LIVE for Christ?

III. Battle within = Holy Spirit vs. our sin nature

A. Paul teaches us HOW TO BE victorious in this battle:

- (R) Galatians 2: 20 or p. 891 in pew Bible
- +
- (R) Galatians 5: 24
 - How often do I need to crucify the passions & desires of my sinful nature? = Jesus says in (Q) Luke 9: 23 “...take up your cross daily”

B. Self-check = are you more Christ-like or still pagan-like underneath; (R) Galatians 5: 19 – 21 vs (R) Galatians 5: 22 - 23

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