

“If Any Will Come After Me, Let Him Deny Himself, And Take Up His Cross Daily And Follow Me”

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The Kingdom of God is the by-product of the working of the cross in our lives. The Fruit or evidence that the cross has been working in our lives will be a manifestation of the righteousness rule of God within. When God’s righteous Kingdom is reigning in our hearts, an ever-increasing peace and joy will abound within our lives.

“*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done*”. In Heaven, the Kingdom of God is the only kingdom; there are no opposing kingdoms or kings contending for position and thus, in Heaven, the will of God is done absolutely. The will of God is synonymous with the Kingdom of God. Wherever God’s will is active, His Kingdom is there! No real evidence of the kingdom of God will be seen on this planet earth, until God’s Kingdom first rules and reigns within the lives of His people!

Jesus taught us to pray that the same unopposed rulership of His kingdom in Heaven, where God’s will reigns supreme, would come in earth. We are not to be settling for the enemy domination of Earth! Since the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17), these qualities of Heaven, then, ought to be evident in the life of one submitted to the cross or the sanctification process. The terms Sanctification, fiery trial, baptism of fire, dealings, and the cross can generally be used to convey the same thing. We might define the sanctification process as the means by which God lovingly works through circumstances in our lives, to make manifest previously unseen fleshly ways. This usually uncomfortable activity of the Lord, mixed with the difficult circumstances of our lives, forces us to choose between our ways and the Lord’s ways. If we choose the Lord’s ways then we are crucifying our old man or our right to self-rulership. The person who has done this has in fact, taken up his cross and is following Jesus! Example; a co-worker gets the glory for something we did, and rather than move into resentment, we choose to crucify our right to self-pity, anger and unforgiveness.

These dealings are working to † “cross” † out *my* ways and will in order that God’s ways and will can be done and performed in my life. No true believer would ever announce that they believed that their understanding, ways and will were superior to Gods; that would be ludicrous! Yet everyday, thousands upon thousands of Christians, worldwide, choose their own direction, will and mind over God’s, simply by not acknowledging Him in all their ways! The cross is not an icon. The cross is a weapon of death and it is meant to bring my fleshly and carnal old man into conflict and ultimately to death. This conflict is a warfare *we will* experience *until* we surrender and or crucify our fleshly wants, mind and ways. This surrender is not a one-time event, but rather, a continual and progressive surrendering of our self-ruled life to a Christ-ruled or spirit controlled life! Again, the cross is an instrument of death. Legally and positionally, our old man was crucified with Christ, yet this crucifixion has to be “worked out” as the Holy Spirit makes us aware of “the deeds of the flesh” that need to be “mortified” or killed! Without a doubt, this process of “death” to our old man *will* produce pain and discomfort. However, the pain and discomfort is only to the old man...not the new man in Christ! As we daily put the old man (self-rule) upon the cross (cross out my ways, will and mind), we will experience greater and greater levels of release and liberty as the person God truly created us to be begins to come forth. Our “true person” has been held captive to sin, the curse of the law and death, which found its rule in our old man. The new man or Christ in us, is seeking to take back territory within us that the enemy once held. The enemy has held and can hold us captive, but it is the work of the anointed one to set captives free! As Christ’s righteous rule begins to possess more and more land within our soul, the enemy (our fleshly nature, old man, and satan) are cast out. As we progressively cast down the old man and place our self motivated will upon our cross, we progressively enter into greater levels of freedom in Christ!

*“That ye **cast down** as pertaining to the former life style, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye **sink into the garment** of the new man, which by and according to God is created in and by righteousness and true holiness. ~ Eph. 4:22-24*

Godly trials, the dealings of God and the cross will result in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. If we speak of or boast how we are always walking in the way of the cross and His sufferings, yet no consistent or evident fruits of peace and joy are manifest, then we are still at war with the Lord who desires to be king of every area of our life. Those

who boast of dying to self, yet *always and consistently* demonstrate a weight of sorrow or depression have not truly surrendered. True believers will experience sorrow and even times of great despondency, but these times of pain, questioning and difficulty are to be seasons where the Lord is actively “tearing down” areas of corruption and self-deceit within us. The Lord’s purpose in tearing down is to build us up! We must remember, however, that the Lord is not tearing down the new man, but only that which is corrupt and is bringing death to us. Through a painful process, a physician removes unwanted and obstructing scar tissue. The surgery is necessary and the motive is to remove an obstruction to is preventing proper functioning! If there are no *consistent* and evident fruits of peace and joy within us then our “cross” is a sham and we are clinging to a form of self-imposed religious bondage! Cut yourself free from that and recognize that this false “cross” must be cast down! The cross (the physician’s scalpel) is intended to remove obstructions so that His fruit and His life might work freely in and through you! If the cross you cling to does not free YOU, then it’s not the cross of Christ! His Cross will produce “glad tidings of great joy”! True surrender to the cross of Christ ultimately results in the JOY of Heaven bursting forth from our lives! This joy does not necessarily mean that we are smiling all of the time, although that can be the case; but rather, we possess an internal *strength* that holds us steady; confidently delighting in His loving rulership. “The joy of the Lord is my strength”.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

After the cross, there is a burial. When something is buried, it remains there! We don’t dig it up, pamper it or try to dress it or feed it! It’s dead and it belongs in the grave! Leave your old man in the grave and if he tries to get out, tell him to get under the feet of the new man! When lust comes calling, stand up and shout, “lust, get back in that grave!” When depression or self-pity or unforgiveness try to dig out of the grave, kick them back to the pit, get your shovel out and put that dirt back in place with the word of your testimony! “*And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony*”!

Now after the grave, there must be a raising up! Notice that this raising up or lifting up is bringing us into newness of life. We are not to be living out of the old ways or the old life style. We are a new creation! This newness of life is resurrection life! The old life is gone...it is past or passing away. If I am truly living a surrendered life, where I am *daily* laying down my will and desires or my self-rulership, then I will begin to see and experience the affects of His resurrection in my everyday life! The cross brings our old man down to death, but the resurrection power lifts our new man into heights of rest and blissful trust and communion with God. I *must* take up my cross daily; I *must* apply the cross to my will daily, because “the flesh wars against the Spirit”. However, as we continue to surrender our self-rule to His Spirit control, this battle will become less and less. I do not mean to imply that the warfare will end, but rather, as we yield to His control and He begins to possess “territory” within us, we will enter into a life of peace and joy regardless of the difficulties, trials or circumstances. Amen!

“Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.” Psa. 51:8

The true cross of Jesus Christ, though it brings our old man down into death, ultimately brings us into resurrection life and victory; and this victory will radiate and be known and seen as a life rejoicing! “*The Lord shall arise upon thee and His glory shall be seen upon thee*” ~Isa. 60:2

This pinnacle of victory, where His righteousness, peace and joy reigns in and through us, will triumph, even in suffering or severe trials! The cross of Christ will produce God’s Kingdom rule within us and be seen and felt by others around us! Continue to surrender self-rulership unto the rulership and will of Christ so that His Kingdom will be evident in you!

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink: but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy ghost.” ~Romans 14:17