

## **Intro**

Last week we reached a climax as Peter confessed that Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah. Then Jesus declared that he would build his church on an apostolic foundation.

This week we reach a major turning point. Jesus begins to reveal that the Messiah will be rejected and the Messiah's people should prepare for rejection. Peter didn't have a category for this revelation.

Kind of like prosperity preachers delude hearers into thinking if our faith is perfect, health and wealth will follow (for them its faith in their own faith). They have no category for the faithful saint who suffers.

They're ignorant of many things. Jesus himself suffered. The world rejects God's rule so they'll reject those who submit to God's rule. And our bodies have become subject to death and decay. This won't be resolved until Jesus returns.

Peter had no category for a suffering Messiah. He was ignorant of Isaiah 53. We need a category for the suffering and submissive Christian. One who follows the pattern of our Lord and Savior. I want you to know that self-denial is essential to Christian living.

## **READ PASSAGE**

## **PRAY**

### **Body**

#### **BIG IDEA: Self-denial**

Definition: forsaking our autonomy (self-government; moral independence) by following Jesus' teaching and embracing suffering for his sake

#### **Point 1: Self-denial of Jesus (16:21-23)**

FCF: ignorance that results in opposing God

#### **“From that time”**

Jesus prepares his disciples for what's coming: *“he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised”* (16:21). There are four elements here:

- 1) To Jerusalem
  - 2) Suffer at the hands of the religious establishment
- he'll be spit at, punched, slapped, scourged, crown of thorns, and crucified

- all three groups mentioned were members of the Sanhedrin, a council that exercised judicial authority in Judea...they didn't have authority to issue the death penalty being under Roman rule (that's why Pontius Pilate had to authorize Jesus' crucifixion)

- chief priests were comprised primarily of Sadducees...scribes were composed primarily of Pharisees

- 3) Be killed

- 4) Be resurrected

“Must” = divine necessity behind these events. The divine plan must take place. The Son must do what the Father has sent him to do. What was decided by the Trinity before the foundation of the world must take place.

First time Jesus clearly reveals his death (he spoke of the sign of Jonah previously). Jesus' death will end in victory over the grave, his execution won't be the final word. Death will end in victory, not defeat.

### **Peter's misunderstanding**

Peter reveals his ignorance: *"Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you"* (16:22). Last week Peter was the privileged recipient of divine revelation and the foundation of the church. This week Peter's a hindrance.

Peter knew Jesus was the Messiah, but ignorance remained. Like the Jewish nation, Peter thought the Messiah would come once, to restore David's kingdom and rescue the Jews from Roman oppression. He didn't know the Messiah would come first to die for sinners. God revealed to Peter the Messiah's identity, but God hadn't yet revealed the full extent of the Messiah's work. The Jews were ignorant of Isaiah 53:1-12, where God revealed this about the Messiah: "he was crushed for our iniquities...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all...he bore the sin of many." Jewish interpretation took the suffering servant to refer to the nation, not the Messiah.

Peter was confused so he opposed Jesus' suffering. By analogy, we can come to faith in Jesus knowing some things (God is good and opposes sin, we've sinned against God, Christ died for our sins, we need to trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross and follow him), but at that time we believe there are many things we are ignorant of. The longer we follow Jesus the more he reveals to us.

In resisting Jesus' determination to go to the cross, Peter was serving Satan's purposes by resisting God's will. He was aligning with Satan. In our ignorance we can serve Satan's purposes! Like bringing division in the local church (Jas 3:14-17). Like counseling divorce when marriage is hard and there's no biblical grounds.

Peter's mind was set on the things of man, not the things of God (16:23). Right thinking matters! Right doctrine matters! Like Peter, we can be conditioned by wrong interpretations and expectations. In our ignorance we too may find ourselves opposing God. Note that God chose

this flawed individual, with much learning to do, as a foundation for his church. God is patient with us!

### **Application**

In calling us to self-denial, Jesus calls us to follow his example:

**Philippians 2:1-8** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In other words, Jesus' self-denial in going to the cross is a model for **corporate church life**. We deny our own interests (selfish ambition) and the pursuit of our own glory (conceit) for the interests of our fellow believers in the local church. We give up our preferences to serve others. We move from being consumers to contributors. We bear with others whose convictions on third tier matters differ from ours, not passing judgment we seek the edification of others (Rom 14:1-6). Third tier = important matters God has chosen to reveal to us, but matters that don't require separation or division.

For example, during this COVID season we've denied ourselves to protect the elderly among us. We've done extra work to follow new health recommendations. We've maintained love and affection for those who had different convictions of COVID responses. We've pursued peace and edification (Rom 14:19). In doing so, we've practice the self-denial of Jesus.

### **Point 2: Self-denial through suffering (16:24)**

#### **Explanation**

FCF: unwillingness to suffer for Jesus' sake

*Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and **take up his cross** and follow me. – 16:24*

Jesus prepares the disciples for his rejection and death. Now he prepares them for the rejection and death they'll encounter. Being Jesus' disciple requires three things: self-denial, taking up one's cross, and following Jesus. Functionally, taking up our cross and following Jesus are ways we deny ourselves.

For these disciples, their cross would be threats, slander, rejection by family, imprisonment, beatings, execution. "*Take up his cross*" pictures suffering death by crucifixion. Jesus was saying, "If you want to be my disciple, you need to be willing to die for my sake."

Crucifixion pictured the horror of public disgrace. The torture of long nails driven through the ankles, long nails driven through the hands or wrists. Loss of blood. Death by suffocation. Having to support your weight with your legs. Slow, agonizing death that could take days.

### **Application**

Taking up our cross doesn't mean the ailments common to humanity after the fall: aging and health issues, difficult people, hard work, our own foolish choices, etc. It means suffering because our allegiance to Jesus:

- 1) I can't tell my unsaved loved one they're okay with God...this makes things awkward and strains relationships...close friendships can be lost because of different allegiances...family relationships strained
- 2) Holding to different moral standards than the culture opens us up to hostility: charges of ignorance or intolerance
- 3) Refusing to engage in common cultural behaviors opens us up to mockery or ostracism
- 4) The Christian teenager's difficulty to fit in
- 5) Following Jesus will undoubtedly make some aspects of life hard for us...what is it for you?

### **Point 3: Self-denial through submission (16:24)**

FCF: unwillingness to give up autonomy

### **Explanation**

*"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and **follow me**. – 16:24*

Self-denial means following Jesus. On one hand, we don't live for ourselves, making our own rules. On the other hand, we live for someone else, learning what Jesus commands and embracing what Jesus commands. We reject our own autonomy. We embrace Jesus' authority. We learn to follow.

### **Application**

Self-denial ≠ I can never do anything I want. Some things are neutral activities given to us by God to enjoy (e.g., quilting, hiking, fishing, hunting, music, art). Some things we want to do are Spirit-given desires (e.g., employment, marriage, friendship, a place of service in the local church). Some people mistake spirituality for the inability to do or have anything I want. If I want it, Jesus must forbid me to have it. After all, spirituality is all about emptying myself of any desires I might have. Philippians 2:4 says it's okay to look out for our own interests, but it's not okay to *only* look out for our own interests. We also need to look out for the interests of others. What Jesus desires is our selfish desires replaced by biblical desires. We live best when we desire the right things.

I'm talking about allowing ourselves to be corrected by Jesus. As we read Scripture or Christian books, as we sit under preaching or attend Sunday school classes, do we allow God to question

us? Do we re-examine our thinking and practice based on what Jesus is saying to us? Am I submitting to God's authority? Or do I insist on my own way? Am I letting God's Word shape my life goals and use of time and money? Am I loving my neighbor as myself? Am I loving that difficult person God has placed in my life? Am I a faithful parent? Child? Spouse? Friend? Employee? Employer? Student? Teacher? Pastor/elder? Deacon? Trustee? Member? Evangelist?

### **Self-denial that was hard: PNS**

**Colossians 3:23-24** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

- instruction to slaves of earthly masters
- for 12 years and 3 months trying to labor for something my heart wasn't in that I wasn't particularly gifted in (my heart was elsewhere... my skills were elsewhere)
- pleading for help daily (like God gifted tabernacle artists and David's hands for war) while fighting complaining, discouragement, confusion, apathy, anger over unjustly being passed over for positions
- had to provide for my family and submit to God's sovereign will

### **Point 4: Self-denial is gain (16:25-28)**

FCF: living for purposes other than Jesus' sake

### **Explanation**

Jesus provides motivation for self-denial: receiving eternal life and escaping final judgment. The repeated "for" = explanations and reasons to follow Jesus.

*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. – 16:25*

This is why we should deny ourselves for Jesus. Because, ironically, losing our life (for Jesus' sake) is the only way to find life = the only way to receive eternal life. When we give our life to Jesus, when we embrace suffering and submission, we'll find eternal life. If we try to keep our autonomy, our own values, our own way of doing things, we'll miss out on eternal life. Gain requires giving up autonomy. We exist for Jesus' sake.

*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life? – 16:26*

If we fail to deny ourselves for Jesus we'll forfeit our life. If we pursue personal gain up to possessing the whole world (exaggeration), we'll gain nothing. Pursing earthly gain instead of following Jesus results in loss. Pursuing earthly gain is fruitless because earthly riches can't be traded for eternal life. Eternal life only comes through self-denial.

This picture is a person who pursues riches and honor while refusing to follow Jesus will attain eternal ruin. Jesus isn't saying we can't have ambition or success or desire to provide for our family. He's saying our life aim must be kingdom purposes (honoring God, personal maturity, stimulating growth in the local church, evangelism, faithfulness in our callings), not personal gain.

*For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. – 16:27*

Follow Jesus because there's a final judgment. There's eternal consequences for our earthly pursuits. Each person will be repaid according to what they have done. In context, have you embraced suffering for Jesus' sake? Have you given up your own autonomy to follow Jesus? We're not saved by our works. We're saved by faith alone. But the faith which saves is not alone. When we trust in Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross for us, we'll love him. If we believe what he says is true, we'll follow what he says. Our deeds flow from our faith. We follow because we believe. Confessing Jesus is the Messiah = confessing Jesus is Lord and Savior. We're believing in a king who is over us. Follow Jesus and you'll have eternal life. Reject Jesus and you'll suffer eternal punishment.

Salvation isn't a one-time decision or a verbal agreement with facts. Salvation is embracing person. A Lord and Savior whom we follow.

*Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. – 16:28*

This reiterates what was said in 16:27. This statement is debated. A quick take concludes Jesus will return for the final judgment before some of these disciples have died. How can this be since those disciples are long dead and Jesus hasn't returned? Didn't Jesus elsewhere envision the gospel reaching all nations before he returns (Matt 24:14)?

The simple solution is that the transfiguration (next week) is what Jesus was referencing. In the transfiguration, some of the disciples (Peter, James, and John) saw Jesus in his shining glory. A foretaste of the glory of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. This occurred six days after Jesus' statement. Our understanding of 16:28 is a third tier issue.

## **Conclusion**

The **self-denial of Jesus**. Jesus went to the cross for our good.

**Self-denial through suffering**. Jesus calls us to suffer for his sake.

**Self-denial through submission**. Jesus calls us to heed his commands.

**Self-denial is gain**. Jesus gives eternal life to his followers.