

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.14.1

The Way of the Disciple

This series addresses a very important, but much neglected truth. There is a cost to being a disciple of Christ.

In Western nations it where there is little overt persecution for calling oneself a Christian, it is hard for many to envision what the cost of following Christ could be.

This teaching series will examine whether many who call them-

selves Christians are actually walking as a disciple of Christ. It will also look at the question of whether a person can be a Christian without being a disciple of Christ.

Although it does not cost a person much in many nations to call themselves a Christian, when a person begins to follow in the footsteps of Christ, living always to do the will of the Father, they will find that conflict, pain, and suffering will immediately be present.

The world has not grown more tolerant of Christianity in the past 2,000 years. Sin and darkness have only increased. The Bible declares :

2 Timothy 3:12

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Wherever Christ's disciples are found, they will be bearing the cross. This is "The Way" appointed for all who would follow in the steps of Christ.

Food for Thought

"The Shepherd knows what pastures are best for His sheep, and they must not question or doubt, but trustingly follow Him." H. W. Smith

"Obedience to the call of Christ nearly always costs everything to two people- the one who is called, and the one who loves that one."
Oswald Chambers

Scripture Memory

Matthew 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. "

Parables Newsletter

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The Way of the Disciple

What Is Christ's Invitation to You?

Matthew 16:24

Then Yahshua said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

The church today has a decidedly un-Biblical view of what Christ's invitation is to mankind. This is revealed in the common question that one Christian asks of another, "When were you saved?" The

There is a tendency of human nature to always seek out an easy path.

church teaches that a person receives salvation by believing and confessing certain things about Jesus Christ/Yahshua the Messiah. A method of

witnessing called "The Roman Road" is frequently employed in which key verses from Paul's letter to the saints in Rome are quoted. For example:

Romans 10:9-10

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

These words appear to sum up the matter of salvation in Christ pretty handily. Believe, and confess. Confession results in salvation! Case closed. The church is satisfied. Ministers assure the members of their congregations that if they have said the sinner's prayer, confessed Christ (and been dunked in the church's baptismal pool), they are saved and nothing more is required.

There is a great deal within the heart of man that would make this cheap view of salvation very appealing. Mankind does not like to suffer. The soul of man seeks out teachings that assure it of salvation with a minimum of inconvenience, and personal cost. The church, which has never been more

sensual and fleshly than it is at this hour, has focused entirely upon a few verses that speak nothing of a surrendered life and suffering, while ignoring the myriad of passages that do.

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake...

I Peter 4:12-13

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

There is a tendency of human nature to always seek out an easy path. God has provided a path to life, but it is not an easy one. The path begins with a narrow gate. It is the narrow gate that Paul has described in Romans 10:9-10. Christ is the entry point into salvation. You can find The Way to life through no other entrance.

John 10:7-9

So Yahshua said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

Again, the statement "he will be saved" sounds like a fait accompli, a complete and finished act. Yet, these words are not the entire testimony of Christ, or of the apostle Paul. There is much, much more. One enters by the gate, but then they must walk the path that leads to life. Salvation is not fully assured unless one does both.

Matthew 24:13

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“But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.”

Hebrews 10:39

But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Is not salvation the promise of preserving our soul? If we would obtain this salvation, we must not only believe and confess Christ, but we must yield our lives wholly to follow Him wherever He would lead. Every one of the gospel writers included this truth in their testimonies of Christ.

Matthew 16:24

Then Yahshua said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and **follow Me.**”

Matthew 19:21

Yahshua said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, **follow Me.**”

Mark 8:34-35

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and **follow Me.** For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.”

Luke 9:23

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and **follow Me.**”

John 10:27-28

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they **follow Me**; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

John 12:26

“If anyone serves Me, he must **follow Me...**”

The majority of those in the church today do not want to know the whole counsel of God. They are content to receive myths and fables, and to have ministers who will tickle their ears and tell them the things they want to hear. The soul of man does not want to hear that they must lose their life to find life. It does not want to hear that there is a cross for every follower of Christ to bear. No, the soul of man wants to hear a message of no-cost salvation.

From the gospels at the beginning of the New Testament, to the book of Revelation at the end, the Holy Spirit inspired men to proclaim a costly salvation. Those who would be saved must “follow” Christ, not just confess Him. Speaking of the overcomers in Christ who stand with the Savior upon Mount Zion, John records:

Revelation 14:4

These are the ones **who follow the Lamb** wherever He goes.

The church has focused exclusively on Christ being the gate, while avoiding the fact that there is also a path to be trod. One cannot arrive at life unless they enter through the narrow gate, **AND** follow Christ down the afflicted path.

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For **the gate** is small, and **the way** is afflicted that leads to life, and few are those who find it.”

The Way of the Disciple

Christ's invitation to mankind is to believe on Him, **AND** to follow Him. The church today proclaims the first part, while leaving off the latter. Why? Because it is in surrendering one's life to follow Christ that the cost is borne.

In America, and most of the Western world, it costs very little, or nothing at all, to confess faith in Christ. Although America is one of the most wicked nations to have ever existed, filled with depravity and violence, focused on the pursuit of pleasure and self-gratification, she has pretended to be a "Christian nation." A person is not persecuted in America simply for professing to be a Christian anymore than they are persecuted for professing to be a Democrat, or a Republican. Yet, let a man or woman begin to be led of the Spirit in all that they do and they will find themselves greatly opposed. Nor will it be secular society, or government alone that opposes them. The chief persecution always arises from those religious followers of God who refuse themselves to take up their cross and follow Christ.

John 16:2-3

"They will make you outcasts from the synagogue (churches), but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me."

People of God, the testimony of the Spirit and the Word is that there is more required to obtain salvation than to believe and confess things about Christ. If you would obtain to eternal life, you must surrender all and take up your cross and follow Christ.

Christ enumerated those things all disciples must count as loss in order to obtain life.

Luke 14:33

"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

Luke 14:26-27

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Mark 10:29-30

Yahshua said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."

If you commit to "follow" Christ, you will find that there is a great cost in doing so. Christ never sought to hide this cost from those who approached Him.

Luke 9:57-62

As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will **follow You** wherever You go." And Yahshua said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." And He said to another, "**Follow Me.**" But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God." Another also said, "I will **follow You**, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." But Yahshua said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Is it not evident in each of these encounters that the cost arose when the issue was **following** Christ? Let us be very practical and define what it is to follow Christ. How did the disciples of Christ follow Him when He was accomplishing His

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earthly ministry? Did they not hear His voice and do whatever He commanded them to do? Christian discipleship always begins with an initial invitation.

Matthew 4:18-22

Now as Yahshua was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "**Follow Me**, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and **followed Him**. Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and **followed Him**.

Matthew 9:9

As Yahshua went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "**Follow Me!**" And he got up and **followed Him**.

We find this pattern repeated over and over again. Christ appears to a man and invites him to follow Him. Each man was challenged to lay aside everything pertaining to their former life, a life that had been lived at the direction of their own soul, and to take Christ as their leader and guide. Rather than continuing with a self-directed life, they had to embrace a Christ-directed life. This pattern still holds true to this day.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Although Christ has ascended to the Father, He has not left us without guidance. Indeed, Yahshua testified that it was much better that He ascend to the Father, for then He could send forth the Spirit to

indwell the hearts of His disciples. The Spirit of Christ within would guide each individual to know the specific will of God for their life.

John 16:7

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

I Corinthians 2:10-12

The Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God...

Christ has sent His Spirit into the world to reveal the thoughts of God to mankind. Christ was led of the Spirit in all things. He stands as the pattern for everyone who would follow after Him. The Father showed the Son all things He desired for Him to do, and the Son was careful to do those things in the same way He saw the Father doing them.

Let a man begin to be led of the Spirit in all that they do and they will find themselves greatly opposed.

John 5:19-20

Therefore Yahshua answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing..."

This is what it means to "follow Christ." This is the invitation Christ has always given to men and women. He is not inviting you and I to merely be-

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lieve and confess certain things about Him. He is inviting us to enter into a Spirit led life where we do nothing of our own initiative. He is entreating all who would be His disciples to walk as He walked.

Let us be very pointed now, and ask the question, "Am I truly following Christ, or am I falling short of the invitation of Christ?" What is the source of direction for your life? We previously read the words of Christ where He declared, "No one can be My disciple unless he hates... even his own life." The Greek word rendered as "life" in our English translations is "psuche." This word means "soul." Christ is saying that a man must hate his own soul to walk as His disciple. What does this mean?

The soul is the seat of the mind, will and emotions. All that pertains to a person's dreams, desires, and

Am I truly following Christ, or am I falling short of the invitation of Christ?"

plans for their life reside in the soul. To be Christ's disciple, a man or woman must lay aside their dreams, desires, and plans for their life and they must embrace

the life God has chosen for them. In essence, they must hate their own soul. They must deny what they would choose for themselves, and embrace what the Father would choose for them.

John 4:34

Yahshua said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."

John 6:38

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

A disciple must become like his Master. Seeing that Christ did not live to please Himself, neither must His disciples. Seeing that Yahshua was not directed by His own soul, neither must His disciples be directed by their own souls. ALL must surrender

their life if at the end of the journey they would receive life eternal.

Matthew 16:25

"For whoever wishes to save his life (psuche - soul) will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Using the illustration Christ gave about salvation being a narrow gate to be entered, and an afflicted path to be walked, we have to conclude that the church for the most part has entered in through this narrow gate, but have not found the path that leads to life. Christ declared that there would be "few" who "find" the path. Implied in this word "find" is not only the act of discovering The Way that leads to life, but also walking it to the end.

Christ never gave any other invitation aside from the invitation to be His disciple. I have found that there are Christians today who think Christ gave two invitations. One was to be a *disciple*, and this required taking up the cross and living a life of complete surrender. The other invitation was to be a *believer* in Christ. People of God, this is great error. The folly of it will be seen on that day when all must give an account of their lives.

A profound parable occurred last year as I was traveling around the country. At two locations at which I spoke, both of which were in people's homes, the hosts' dog got sick and threw up on the floor. On both occasions this occurred at a moment in my presentation when I knew that what I was sharing was difficult, and some present were unable to receive the message. At the latter home, this occurred as the man who owned the house was arguing that it was not necessary to be a disciple to be saved. He suggested that one could be a believer, but not a disciple, while still being assured of salvation. At that moment his dog threw up on the carpet.

Randy, the brother I was traveling with, and I both

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looked at one another. We discerned the parable immediately. The beast nature that Adamic man is enslaved to struggles to receive the message of the cross. If the beast nature is ruling in a man's life, then he will vomit back up the teaching of the cross. He is unable to receive it.

There is much which is offensive in the message of the cross. If you have truly understood Christ's invitation, then you too will struggle to receive it. Does not Christ always link taking up the cross to His invitation to follow Him? Only by crucifying the flesh is any man or woman able to follow in His footsteps.

I Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...

Is this the invitation you have heard and accepted? Or have you been told by man that you need only to believe in Christ and confess Him? At this hour Christ is inviting men and women to "follow" Him. Will you follow? Will you surrender your life to go wherever He leads, and to do whatever He asks of you? Yahshua has no lesser invitation. There is no other path that leads to life.

Must a Christian be a Disciple?

I believe the early apostles would be quite amazed to find that the teachings of Christ have been so altered in the centuries since the church was birthed that the terms *Christian* and *disciple* have been divorced from one another. A false mindset has been propagated throughout Christendom. People are told that Christ came to die for their sins and that they need to believe and confess their faith in His atoning work. Yet, any mention of committing to a new paradigm where Christ directs the course of one's life is omitted, or left for a later time. If the call to discipleship is ever brought up, it is often presented as optional.

As the previous chapter declared, Christ only gave one invitation. He invited men and women to be His disciples by taking up THEIR cross and following Him. He presented no second option where a person could confess Him, but remain in a self-directed life. Indeed, Yahshua reproached people for acting hypocritically by calling Him "Lord" when they were not living to do His will and pleasure.

Luke 6:46

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Yahshua did not actually repeat the word translated as "Lord" twice as it is recorded above. In the Greek language in which the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament exist, a word is repeated to denote emphasis. Repeating a word was the equivalent of putting an exclamation point after it, or putting it in bold type. Christ was saying, "Why do you call me '**LORD!**' and do not do what I say?"

This question, posed by Christ, has at no time been more appropriately asked than at present. Multitudes of people have been introduced to Christian belief apart from any emphasis on the need to adopt Christ as the Head and Ruler of their life.

These same ones accept Yahshua as Savior, eagerly embracing His atoning work on the cross of Calvary, but placing their lives wholly at Christ's disposal to be lived as He would choose is omitted.

One of the plainest Biblical witnesses of Christ's call to *discipleship* is found in His last words to His followers before He ascended into heaven. It is in that passage that is referred to as "The Great Commission."

*"Why do you call me
LORD! and do not do
what I say?"*

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Matthew 28:18-20

And Yahshua came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The Great Commission spoken by Yahshua was not

The Great Commission spoken by Yahshua was not to "go and make Christians," nor to "make confessors."

to "go and make Christians," nor to "make confessors." The commission was to "make disciples." We need not wrangle over what is implied in the use of the word "disciple," for Christ

clearly defined what He intended by the use of this word.

Matthew 10:24-25

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master."

Yahshua reveals that the goal of a disciple is "that he become like his teacher." He also links the relationship between a disciple and his teacher to that of a servant (or slave) with his master. There is a very defined authority structure. A slave must obey his master. A slave lives to do the will and pleasure of the one to whom he belongs. Even as slaves existed in the Roman Empire, and were bought and became the property of their masters, so too has Christ purchased all those who come to Him for salvation.

I Corinthians 6:19-20

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that **you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price...**

Acts 20:28

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd **the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**

II Peter 2:1

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying **the Master who bought them...**

Revelation 5:9

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for **You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.**"

This truth of men being "**purchased**" by Christ is proclaimed extensively throughout the New Testament. Christians are not merely people joining a club, nor are they acolytes who embrace a particular form of belief or teaching. The entrance into the Kingdom of God is only through the blood of Christ. All who enter through His blood become the property of Christ, being bought with an exceedingly high price.

I Peter 1:18-19

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

That all who receive salvation in Christ must become Yahshua's servants is not unjust. Christ has taken men and women who were dead in their sins, and He has made them alive. This transfer from death unto life came at an exceptionally high price. Christ accepted death that He might give life to others. Is it not just that He would require all those

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who receive *His life* to surrender that life to be lived as He directs? After all, the life we have in Christ is not our own. Apart from receiving Christ's life, we would be spiritually dead and separated from the kingdom of God. We would be lost and condemned in our trespasses and sin.

Consider how the church has cheapened this great gift that the Son of God has given to mankind. The church wants to be made alive in Christ, but they do not want to give *their lives* to Christ. They want salvation without sacrifice. The church wants the riches that are found only in Yahshua the Messiah, but they do not want to live the same life of devotion to the will and pleasure of the Father that He lived. The vast majority of Christians today wish to remain living the life of their own choosing, a self-focused pursuit of personal fulfillment and pleasure, while adding the benefits of Christ to their goody basket. Christ never offered salvation on these terms.

Matthew 16:25-26

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Yahweh has given us many ways to visualize the salvation He has provided to mankind. The grandest similitude found anywhere in Scripture is in the epic history of Yahweh delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt. In this event we see both the atoning work of Christ in the blood of the Passover lamb placed on the doors of the homes of those dwelling in Goshen, and we also see the IMMEDIATE call to FOLLOW wherever God would lead.

Exodus 12:11

“Now you shall eat [the Passover meal] in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste - it is Yahweh's Passover.”

The events of this first Passover Feast serve as a type and shadow of those things to be fulfilled in Christ.

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to ***food or drink*** or in respect to a ***festival*** or a new moon or a Sabbath day - ***things which are a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.***

I Corinthians 5:7

For Christ, our Passover, also has been sacrificed...

As the Israelites ate that first Passover meal 1,500 years prior to the birth of Christ, they were acting out in type the salvation that Yahweh would one day provide for all mankind. Yahweh would send forth His Son as the Passover Lamb to be sacrificed that man might be “passed over” by death. The Lamb of God would be slain that mankind might live.

The church wants to be made alive in Christ, but they do not want to give their lives to Christ.

God instructed the Israelites to take a year old male lamb without spot or blemish, and to bring it into their homes. The lamb was to dwell with them for four days, and afterward it was to be slain and the blood put on the doorposts and lintel of the home. The death angel was to visit Egypt that same night. Wherever he saw the blood on the door he would pass over and no one inside would die. In every house where there was no blood, the firstborn males would die.

This aspect of salvation has been embraced by the church today. The church proclaims the death of Christ as a substitution for mankind. The Son of God died that men might live before God. Yet, this

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is not all that occurred on that first Passover. There was much more.

The Israelites were instructed to not only place the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorways, they were also commanded to eat the lamb and be ready to travel.

Exodus 12:8-11

“They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste - it is Yahweh’s Passover.”

What do these things symbolize? The unleavened bread and bitter herbs, along with the Passover Lamb, were all types and shadows of Christ. The

The bitter herbs symbolize that the life of Christ was very difficult.

unleavened bread represents Christ’s sinless life. The bitter herbs symbolize that the life of Christ was very difficult. He was “a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). In

eating each of these things, the Israelites were acting out annually the coming salvation of God. Not only would Christ’s blood pay the penalty for the sin of mankind, but Christ would send forth His Spirit to produce life inside of every man, woman and child who became a partaker of His salvation. Eating the Passover meal is symbolic of receiving the life of Christ into our bodies.

A great error in the church today is in thinking that Christ suffered so that they will not have to suffer. That this is profound error is revealed repeatedly in Christ’s invitation to men and women to “take up

YOUR CROSS and follow Me.” Christ had a cross to bear, and so too do all who would come to Him for salvation. As the Israelites ate the bitter herbs, they were giving testimony to this bitter aspect of our union with Christ. Even as we become partakers of Christ’s life, we also become partakers of His suffering.

II Corinthians 4:7-10

But we have this treasure [the life of Christ] in earthen vessels [our bodies], so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Yahshua, so that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our body.

Although Paul wrote these words in the context of the experience of those who are apostles and ministers, the Bible reveals that this is the common experience of all who are members of the body of Christ.

I Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...

The church today is very willing to accept the life of Christ inside them as they are born a second time of the Spirit of God, but they do not want to embrace the sufferings of Christ. However, apart from sharing in Yahshua’s suffering, no man can be perfected. It is those experiences that afflict our natural life that are the instruments the Father uses to bring forth a spiritual creation within.

I Peter 5:10

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen

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and establish you.

We enter into these experiences of suffering in the same way that Yahshua did. We yield our lives to be directed by the Holy Spirit. This aspect of salvation is foreshadowed in Yahweh's instructions to Moses to command the people to eat the Passover meal "with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand." Those who become partakers of the life of Christ, who are delivered from death into life, are to immediately be ready to depart their old life and yield themselves to go wherever the Spirit of Christ would lead them, and to do whatever Yahweh would ask of them.

Mark 8:34

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

There is a tremendous consistency throughout the entire testimony of the Bible. Both Old and New Testaments reveal the two-fold aspect of salvation. Salvation is established through both *faith* and *obedience*. Not only must the Christian believe in the Son of God as the "Savior," he must also surrender to follow Him as "Lord."

Luke 2:11

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a **Savior**, who is Christ the **Lord**.

Although it is common among Christians today to speak of the Son of God as their "Lord," there are few who actually have embraced Yahshua as the Lord of their life. On that day when we must all give an account, Yahweh will judge all men with impartiality. Those who have surrendered their lives to live to do His will and pleasure will be afforded entrance into His kingdom. Those who have lived life at the direction of their own soul, while paying lip service to the lordship of Christ will be denied entrance into the kingdom.

Matthew 7:21

"Not everyone who says to Me, '**LORD!**' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

This aspect of entering into our inheritance in Christ was also very plainly foreshadowed in the history and experiences of Israel. After partaking of the first Passover, the entire nation of Israel departed Egypt. At that time Yahweh did a remarkable thing. He gave them the pillar of fire and cloud to always dwell with them, and to serve as a guide in their travels. The pillar of fire and cloud stand as a type and shadow of the Holy Spirit whom Christ has sent forth as a guide for all those who have become partakers of His life.

A great error in the church today is in thinking that Christ suffered so that they will not have to suffer.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Galatians 5:25

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Immediately after Yahshua was baptized in the Jordan River, the Spirit of God descended upon Him and remained. At once, the Spirit began to lead and direct every action of the Son of God.

Mark 1:10-12

Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the

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heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.

This immediacy of being led of the Spirit is brought forth in Yahweh's command for the children of Israel to eat the Passover meal fully girded and ready to travel. Tragically, this aspect of life in Christ is absent from the proclamation of the gospel today. If we were to re-write the history of Israel according to the experience of a large segment of the church today, we would have them lounging at ease in their homes, eating the Passover Lamb without the inclusion of bitter herbs. They would then remain in Goshen, continuing to eat from the fleshpots of Egypt and pursuing intercourse in the ways of a fallen world system. The tragic result is that Christians remain in bondage to sin and selfish living, rather than attaining conformity to the image of Christ.

Yahweh has appointed unto men that they suffer many things in this life.

The desire of God for all who are in Christ Jesus/Yahshua the Messiah is that, when they become partakers of His life, they at once yield all their remaining days to be lived at His direction and pleasure. We must depart from life in Egypt, which stands as a symbol of the world, and embrace a new paradigm where we accept suffering and reproaches that we might be transformed into the same image as the Savior of mankind.

Hebrews 13:12-13

Therefore Yahshua also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

Understand then, that the invitation of Christ has never been anything less than discipleship. His invitation is "Come. Take up your cross, and follow Me."

Why Does God Require Christians to Suffer?

The inescapable message proclaimed by Christ and His apostles is that Yahweh has appointed unto men that they suffer many things in this life. This truth is affirmed through the most common image associated with Christianity; the cross. The cross is an instrument of suffering, leading to the death of the individual.

As has been demonstrated in the previous two chapters, Christ gave forth only one form of invitation. He invited men and women to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me." For those living in that hour when Rome used crucifixion as a form of capital punishment, it was clearly understood that what Christ was announcing was a call to embrace suffering.

The question arises, "Why does Yahweh require all who would follow Christ to experience suffering? What is the reason behind it?" The answer is found as we define the salvation that Christ provides for mankind.

I think the most common concept of salvation today is that Christ came to deliver men from the suffering of hell. Many Christians equate salvation with an escape from eternal torment. To them, being saved is the equivalent of receiving a "Get-Out-Of-Hell-Free-Card."



I do not deny that being delivered from the Lake of

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Fire, which is also called “The Second Death” (Revelation 20:14, 21:8), is a component of the salvation Christ has provided to mankind, but it does not come near to defining the true nature of salvation. Other aspects of the salvation of Christ are revealed in the following Scriptures.

I John 3:8-9

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

I John 3:5-6

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Luke 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Christ came to set men free from their bondage to sin. In the last chapter we looked at the parable contained in the nation of Israel being brought forth from a life of slavery and harsh servitude in Egypt. This stands as a type and shadow of the bondage all men experience. All who are born of the first Adam enter this world as slaves to sin. Like Pharaoh, sin rules with an iron hand over the lives of mankind and refuses to let them go. Unless God had sent a Savior, all men would remain in bondage to sin today. Christ came to set the captives free.

In his epistle to Rome, the apostle Paul describes this bondage of the natural man to sin.

Romans 7:14-25

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate... So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God! He has, through Yahshua Christ our Lord!

The salvation Christ has provided for men is primarily focused on delivering mankind from the sin's rule over their lives. Prior to the appearing of Christ, no man had ever been able to break free from the shackles of sin. King David was described by Yahweh as “a man after My own heart,” but he sinned grievously, committing both adultery and murder. What a powerful hold this tyrant sin has over the lives of men! The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Christ came to set men free from their bondage to sin.

When Yahweh sent Moses to lead His people out from bondage in Egypt, Moses repeatedly entreated Pharaoh to let the people of God go. Pharaoh adamantly refused. Even when Yahweh struck Egypt with many plagues, Pharaoh remained intractable. He would not permit God's chosen people to depart from his rule. So too do we see sin refusing to release mankind from its steel grip. No amount of entreaty will persuade sin to free men

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born under this bondage.

It was only after the blood of the Passover lamb was placed on the doors of the homes of Yahweh's people that they were released. There is a profound message to be understood in this. Yahweh had told Adam that if he transgressed against His will by eating of the fruit forbidden to him, he would surely die. The Scriptures tell us that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and "the soul that sins must die" (Ezekiel 18:4). This is an inescapable law.

Pharaoh stands as a symbol of the power of sin over the lives of men. Men have entered into bond-

The only escape from the bondage of sin is through death.

age because they have sold themselves to sin. Our forefather Adam sealed the fate of all of his descendants when he sinned in the Garden of Eden. We were

all "in Adam" when he sinned, and consequently we were all made sinners, and all became subject to death.

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...

Mankind, in Adam, became subject to the law of sin and death. Pharaoh stands as a type of the mastery of sin over mankind. Pharaoh would not let his captives go free. He demanded that they spend their lives in service to him, and that they die in his presence. Yahweh, however, made a way for mankind to be set free.

Death, being a consequence of sin, could not be denied. The fact remains that "the wages of sin is death." Yet, Yahweh would permit the soul of one creature to serve as a substitution for the soul of another. In the Old Testament we see this in the

substitutionary sacrifices that Moses delivered to the children of Israel. A bull, an ox, a sheep or goat, or a bird could be sacrificed that the sin of man might be passed over. These animals had to be slain. Their blood had to be poured out, for the Scriptures teach that "the soul is in the blood." Yahweh would accept the soul of these animals in exchange for the souls of men and women. These animals died that man might live.

Understand now, why Israel could not be released from bondage in Egypt until after the blood of the Passover lamb had been shed and placed on their doorways. The only escape from the bondage of sin is through death. The Israelites could either die for their sins, or someone else could die in their place. The penalty of sin must be met.

Pharaoh released the people of God the night of that first Passover, for their lives had slipped out of his control. The Passover lamb had died for them, even as Christ has died for us. His death became our death. Having died with Christ, sin (Pharaoh) no longer has any control over us. The penalty of death had been paid. By becoming partakers of the resurrection life of Christ the people of God are freed from sin's bondage. This is the salvation Christ purchased for mankind.

You may say, "This is all well and fine, and I agree with it, but why must I then suffer? If the power of sin has been broken over my life, why must I also carry a cross? Was not the cross of Christ sufficient?" These are excellent questions, and they deserve an answer.

We become one with Christ by faith as we believe in His atoning work. When He died, we died. When He rose again from the dead, we were raised to newness of life with Him (Romans 6). All of this is symbolized in the ordinance of baptism. When we are placed under the water, our union with Christ in His death is portrayed. When we are lifted back out of the water, our union with Christ in His resurrection is depicted. Even as a person being brought out of the water will take into his/her

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lungs a breath of air, so too do all who are in Christ receive into their beings the Holy Spirit that they might have the divine life of Christ inside of them.

In Christ, men and women become new creatures. There is life where there was formerly death. A spiritual being has been conceived, and from the moment that we receive the seed of Christ into our beings it begins to grow, mature, and advance in conformity to the image of the Son of God. Yahweh desires that this process continue until Christ be fully formed in us and we attain to the fulness of the stature that belongs to Yahshua (Ephesians 4:13).

At the same time that a new spiritual creature is growing and advancing in us, the flesh has to be stripped away. Our physical bodies remain with us, and they still remain under the curse of sin. This is obvious, for death continues to work in our natural bodies. They are all decaying and growing old. What Paul declared in Romans chapter 7 continues to hold true. "In my flesh dwells no good thing. Sin dwells in my flesh."

It is given to those who are born again of the Spirit of Christ to do two things. They must mature spiritually, and they must put the flesh to death. Only by putting the flesh to death can a new creation arise and be manifested before the eyes of God and all creation. This process of the life of Christ arising to maturity within us, while at the same time our old Adamic life is being reduced to nothing, is summed up in the following statement of John the Baptist.

John 3:30

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

The apostle Paul expresses this two-fold process in the following manner.

Galatians 5:24-25

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Christians are called to live by, and walk in, the Spirit, and they must crucify the flesh. This is where the cross enters into the lives of those who are disciples of Christ.

It would be difficult for any Christian to determine for themselves the best way to accomplish this two-fold goal. We are often blinded to the presence of sin in our lives, and we cannot kill what we cannot perceive. Nor, do we know the best manner in which to promote the advancement of Christ's life within our beings.

Suppose God would ask you at the beginning of your life in Christ to design a path through your coming days that would promote spiritual growth and lead to the death of the flesh. Do you have the wisdom and understanding to design such a course? Of course not. None of us do. This is why God never asks such a thing from His children.

Christians are called to live by, and walk in, the Spirit.

Yahweh alone knows what experiences and circumstances will provide the optimum environment for our growth as sons of God. Therefore, He requires that all who come to Christ be prepared to surrender their lives to be led of His Spirit wherever He would direct. The invitation of Christ is "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me."

Yahweh sees with perfect sight those things in our life that need to be put to death, and He also understands how to best promote spiritual growth. As we yield our lives to be led of His Spirit we will find Him ordering our lives so that we encounter those circumstances, trials, and provocations that will expose the sin in our flesh, while providing opportunities for the spirit man to rise up and put the

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flesh to death.

If you perceive the goal of salvation, to deliver men from sin's rule over their lives, then you can understand the necessity of God leading all Christians down an afflicted path. Although Christ has purchased this deliverance from sin's bondage, it must yet be manifested in our lives. There is a difference

Most Christians choose an easy path, avoiding trials, suffering, loss, and persecution...

between being offered a gift and making it your own possession. Christ has redeemed us from sin's dominion, but we must arise and engage in spiritual warfare

in order to put every enemy under our feet. He has promised us that no enemy will ever be able to stand against us, whether it be fear, or lust, or anger, or covetousness, or pride, or any other thing. However, it is required of us that we take the victory Christ has gained for us and apply it to our lives.

The apostle Paul explained the purpose of afflictions and suffering in the lives of the saints. He stated that Christians are constantly delivered over to experiences of death to the natural Adamic life that the life of Yahshua can be displayed in us.

II Corinthians 4:8-11

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Yahshua, so that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Yahshua's sake, so that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

If mankind is left to determine his own path through life, he will invariably choose a way other than that which God has determined for him. Most Christians choose an easy path, avoiding trials, suffering, loss, and persecution wherever possible.

The entire body of teaching known as "the prosperity gospel" has arisen from the soul of man as it seeks comfort, abundance and pleasure above all else. Although such a doctrine is highly appealing to the soul of man, it will lead no one to maturity in Christ. The path that leads to life is afflicted, not one of uninterrupted comfort and blessing.

Matthew 7:13-14

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is afflicted that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

As I look back on the past 12 years of my life, after having yielded to follow Christ wherever He would lead, I observe an afflicted path. There is no better way to describe it. Yet, it has also been a path of tremendous grace. The Lord of life has walked with me the entire way. I am confident He will continue to do so. Like Paul, I want to finish my course with joy, knowing that there is a reward awaiting that is so far surpassing any of these "momentary, light afflictions" as to be beyond comparison.

People of God, if you do not accept the invitation of Christ to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me," you will never arrive at the glorious inheritance that awaits those who walk as overcomers. Can we not embrace momentary afflictions now to receive a far surpassing inheritance in Christ? As the apostle Peter put it, Yahweh has determined that we suffer "for a little while," but the end He has in mind for His sons and daughters is glorious.

I Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now **for a little while**, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yahshua Christ...

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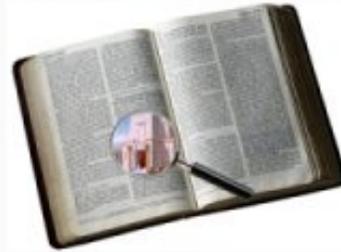
I Peter 5:10

After you have suffered *for a little while*, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

The past twelve years now seem to have been but a moment. When all is said and done, I too will confess that I suffered only “for a little while.” Christ is calling many more of His sons and daughters to yield their lives to follow Him in this hour. Yahshua is a compassionate Shepherd. He knows our weaknesses, and He is of very tender mercies. He does not desire that any should fall short of the high calling set before them. He is inviting many at this hour to become His disciples. Will you heed the call?

He knows our weaknesses, and He is of very tender mercies.

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PARABLES PRECEPT— Is That in the Bible?



Have you not often heard the expression stated, “God works in mysterious ways”? Did you know this saying is not found in the Bible? Nevertheless, the saying is true. Man often has a difficult time understanding what Yahweh is doing, for man’s reasoning is very different from God’s reasoning.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

The apostle Paul expressed a similar thought. He said that a natural man does not understand the thoughts of God, for they are foolishness to him. Paul declares that a man must be born again of the Spirit in order to truly understand the thoughts of God. Even then, men must resist the tendency to think as natural men. Those who are “in

Christ” are spiritual men, and must take God’s thoughts as their own.

I Corinthians 2:12-14

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.