

INTRO: How many of us ever get the thoughts about how “lucky” the Lord is to have us on His side? We think about what we have given up, what we have done, how much talent and ability we possess and how much we have given up just to be a follower of Christ and we think of ourselves in the light of really doing the Lord a favor by becoming a Christian, of sorts. The rich young ruler of Mark 10:17-22 was a similar case as he came running to Jesus Christ asking what needed to be done to inherit eternal life and Jesus answered simply, follow the commandments. The young man was thrilled to answer that these he had kept since his youth but had he really? When Christ questioned him in the area in which he had been holding back, and that was about his wealth, we see he was not willing to give that up for the cause of Christ, therefore he had something in his life that he was not willing to let go of for the cause of Christ – something he loved more than he loved Christ Himself, therefore he went away sad, choosing his wealth over being a child of God. He sought for acceptance in the kingdom and thought everything was well until the Lord struck to the heart of his problem, his love of his possessions that was more important than his love for Christ. So many today, like this young man are trying to buy their way into heaven – not through financial gifts, but through their own “good” living, but this is not the way. We receive salvation by mercy and grace through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and our Redeemer. Once we receive this, then we are encouraged to walk “worthy” of the grace by which we have been saved.

- A.** John the Baptist was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit from the womb, but we read in Matthew 3:11 he did not consider himself as any great man, worthy of anything on his own merit, rather he recognized his position as compared to that of his Savior. From all we can tell the Centurion in Matthew 8:8 was a good man as well, apparently treating his soldiers with honor and respect and even having respect for Jesus Christ as he realized he was not “worthy” that Jesus Christ should even come under his roof; yet, Jesus Christ said never had He seen such faith in Israel. Even though the story of the Prodigal Son is a parable, it teaches us a great lesson as the Son had decided to leave his Father and go his own way and after realizing the errors of his way, he decided to come back, but with an humbleness of heart that he had never possessed before as he would say he was no longer “worthy” to be called the Father’s Son. You see, none of these received “salvation” or favor with God because of their good deeds, rather it was their faith in Jesus Christ and eventually their acceptance of Him as their Redeemer-Savior.
- B.** I have been around many “good” men and women over the years, good morals, clean manners, courteous to others, even thoughtful of others, yet still sinners cause they never placed their faith in Jesus Christ. Many thought they would make it to heaven cause they were “good” but without faith in Jesus Christ they will always remain “unworthy” of His salvation. Certainly as children of God, we are to live decent moral lives, but without faith, that gets us nothing. David Livingston once stated **“I WILL PLACE NO VALUE ON ANYTHING I HAVE OR MAY POSSESS, EXCEPT IN RELATION TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.”** To him, financial gain and position meant nothing, he had given it all up for the cause of Christ and that is what it takes to be pleasing to the Lord.
- a. In verse 37 of Matthew 10, we see that even our family does not come before the Lord. My family, as well as yours, is precious and a blessing beyond measure and in many cases, there is a closeness that is hard to break and a love that holds the family together like superglue; but even my family, whom I value extremely high on my list of priorities, must come behind my dedication to the Lord.
 - b. My love for my wife must be in submission to my love for Jesus Christ. My children and grandchildren must come behind my love for Jesus Christ. I do not believe it is God’s will for us to abandon our family while we go out to “serve” the Lord, for this would go against God’s own teachings about taking care of the household in which you have been placed over; but I do believe that we must be willing to give up everything, including them, if God so desires us in His service. This applies to everything in our lives, wealth, position, fame, etc., all must be relegated to the “dung” heap when compared with serving Jesus Christ. Remember He said those that **“loves father or mother more than [Him], and loves son or daughter more than [Him] is not worthy of [Him].”** We must break with everything that hinders our commitment to the Lord, no matter what those may be. History provides us with a pretty good example: **WHEN JULIUS CAESAR LANDED ON THE SHORES OF BRITAIN WITH HIS ROMAN LEGIONS, HE TOOK A BOLD AND DECISIVE STEP TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF HIS MILITARY VENTURE. ORDERING HIS**

MEN TO HALT ON THE EDGE OF THE CLIFFS OF DOVER, HE COMMANDED THEM TO LOOK DOWN AT THE WATER BELOW. TO THEIR AMAZEMENT, THEY SAW EVERY SHIP IN WHICH THEY HAD CROSSED THE CHANNEL ENGULFED IN FLAMES. CAESAR HAD DELIBERATELY CUT OFF ANY POSSIBILITY OF RETREAT! NOW THAT HIS SOLDIERS WERE UNABLE TO RETURN TO THE CONTINENT, THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT FOR THEM TO DO BUT TO ADVANCE AND CONQUER! AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THEY DID. This does not mean we “hate” others rather no one nor anything should be considered worthy competition for the Son of God! We should love our children and our parents but that must not take the place of our love for Christ.

C. Then if we are eventually to be counted as “worthy” we must not fear “bearing the cross of Christ”. As He took up His “cross”, so must we as we follow His example. This alludes to the practice in those days of the criminal carrying his own cross to the place of crucifixion, so we must be ready to suffer whatever may be necessary for the cause of Christ. Let me give you perhaps a sort of illustration here. I believe anyone that tells an expectant mother that delivery of that child is going to be fun is a little on the strange side – just ask any mother. But through this extraordinary pain comes a beautiful child and the pain was not meaningless, it was necessary for the child to be born. Today’s society often tells us that pain is meaningless as someone cheated you or hurt you in some way, but look at the result of the pain of childbirth. So it is in our walk with God, sometimes it takes some pain for something beautiful to emerge. Many of our modern churches try and teach that along with salvation, everything will be perfect – I believe this is an incorrect image of the Christian walk.

a. Let us quickly look at verse 39, **“He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.”** One that thinks they have found their life at the cost of denying Christ will soon find they lose it in an eternal death; but the one that is willing to even lose their life rather than deny Christ, will find they have gained eternal life. Self-denial is a prerequisite for the kingdom of God for our desires, our wishes, must be placed in perspective to those that pertain to God’s desires. Every decision we make, each action we take, should be done in light of God’s will. We must learn to walk “worthy” of the grace that we have been given.

b. **WELL, HERE I AM, LORD. YOU SAID “TAKE UP YOUR CROSS,” AND I’M HERE TO DO IT. IT’S NOT EASY, YOU KNOW, THIS SELF-DENIAL THING. I MEAN TO GO THROUGH WITH IT THOUGH, YES SIR! I’LL BET YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO BE DISCIPLES LIKE ME. I’VE COUNTED THE COST AND SURRENDERED MY LIFE, AND IT’S NOT AN EASY ROAD. YOU MIND IF I LOOK OVER THESE CROSSES? I’D KIND OF LIKE A NEW ONE. I’M NOT FUSSY, YOU UNDERSTAND; BUT A DISCIPLE HAS TO BE RELEVANT THESE DAYS. I WAS WONDERING -- ARE THERE ANY THAT ARE VINYL PADDED OR MAYBE WITH A WHEEL ON THE END? I’M THINKING OF ATTRACTING OTHERS, SEE? AND IF I COULD SHOW THEM A COMFORTABLE CROSS, I’M SURE I COULD WIN A LOT MORE. GOT TO KEEP UP WITH THE POPULATION EXPLOSION AND ALL. AND I NEED SOMETHING DURABLE SO I CAN TREASURE IT ALWAYS. OH, IS THERE ONE THAT’S SORT OF FLAT SO IT WOULD FIT UNDER MY COAT? ONE SHOULDN’T BE TOO OBVIOUS. FUNNY, THERE DOESN’T SEEM TO BE MUCH CHOICE HERE. JUST THAT COARSE, ROUGH WOOD. I MEAN THAT WOULD HURT. DON’T YOU HAVE SOMETHING MORE DISTINCTIVE, LORD? I CAN TELL YOU RIGHT NOW, NONE OF MY FRIENDS ARE GOING TO BE IMPRESSED BY THIS SHODDY WORKMANSHIP. THEY’LL THINK I’M A NUT OR SOMETHING. AND MY FAMILY WILL BE JUST MORTIFIED. WHAT’S THAT? IT’S EITHER ONE OF THESE OR FORGET THE WHOLE THING? BUT LORD, I WANT TO BE YOUR DISCIPLE, I MEAN, JUST BEING WITH YOU; THAT’S ALL THAT COUNTS; BUT LIFE HAS TO HAVE A BALANCE, TOO. BUT YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND -- NOBODY LIVES THAT WAY TODAY! WHO IS GOING TO BE ATTRACTED BY THIS SELF-DENIAL BIT? I MEAN, I WANT TO; BUT LET’S NOT OVER DO IT. START GETTING RADICAL LIKE THIS, AND THEY’LL HAVE ME OFF TO THE FUNNY FARM. KNOW WHAT I MEAN? I MEAN BEING A DISCIPLE IS CHALLENGING AND EXCITING AND I WANT TO DO IT; BUT I DO HAVE SOME RIGHTS, YOU KNOW. NOW LET’S SEE -- NO BLOOD -- OK? I JUST CAN’T STAND THE THOUGHT OF THAT, LORD... LORD? JESUS? NOW WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE HE WENT?**

CONCLUSION: Ephesians 4:1, **“I, therefore, the prison of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”** 1 Thessalonians 2:12, **“..so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the god who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”** 2 Thessalonians 1:5, **“This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.”** Are you having to endure what you might consider suffering in this life, are there some difficult roads you have been traveling, are you wondering why God is allowing such trials and tribulations to come your way? Perhaps He is in the process of making us “worthy” to be called “children of God”. Perhaps there is no other way to enter into the glory of heaven and all we go through is for our good. But I must love Him above everything, I must be willing to bear the cross He has given me to bear and if I have to give even my life for the kingdom of God, then I will win. When I stand before God I want to be counted as “worthy” , I do not want His grace to be wasted on me,. Only until I realize I am nothing will I amount to anything in the kingdom of God.