

Courage From The Life Of Christ

By Mike Treneer

Jesus taught us that the cross is the heart of true discipleship. Luke 14:27 says, “Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciples.” When we think of Jesus’ courage of go to the cross, we can think that we are on holy ground and totally out of our depth that we cannot fathom the enormity of what is involved as Jesus struggles in the garden of Gethsemane to receive the cup from the father’s hand .

Cross- the cup of the wrath of God: this is the cup that we should be holding to drink. And yet Jesus takes the cup of wrath from the hands of his father, takes out of the hands of the disciples and instead puts in the hands of the disciples the cup of the New Covenant in His blood, the cup as Paul calls is the cup of blessing. The courage for Jesus to take up the cross had always there from the dawn of eternity. The cross was in the mind of God from before the time began. Revelation 13:8 says, “The lamb was slain before the foundation of the earth.”

Willingness of Jesus to take up the cross: Hebrews 10:5 says, ‘therefore when Christ came into the world he said, sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but the body you prepared for me. With burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, “Here I am in the scroll, I have come to do your will O God.”’ The courage of Jesus in the incarnation began in the releasing of Heaven. We can think of Jesus reading Isaiah 50:4-9 as he grew up as a boy in Nazareth in human form and how he began to self understand his mission as Messiah and his destiny to the cross through his study through Old Testament scriptures. Jesus drew his courage from the prophecies of the Old Testament since His young age.

Teaching about the cross: In his ministry Jesus repeatedly told his disciples that the son of Man has to suffer, has to be rejected by the high priests, elders and killed and has to rise on the third day according to the scriptures and taught them more and more about the cross. Peter rebuked Jesus for saying this; but Jesus rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me Satan; you do not have in mind the things of God.” He turned to the crowd and said, “If anyone comes after me, he has to deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” As we follow Jesus’ path to the cross from eternity to the garden of Gethsemane we can hardly conceive the courage involved, the depth of the love that inspired, motivated and filled that courage. Though we cannot understand the depth of His love, yet we can reflect on the love and courage of Jesus in bearing the cross for us.

Embracing the cross: 1Peter 2:21 tells us that all of us are called to embrace the cross because Christ has suffered for us and follow his example and fellowship in His sufferings. Cross comes to us in different ways and at different times. It can be the pain of self denial or difficulties areas of our sin nature. We know how painful it is to carry the cross. 2 Corinthians 4th chapter Paul says, “We have this treasure in the Jars of clay to show the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are hard pressed on every side and not crushed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that His life may be revealed in our mortal bodies.” The death is at work in us but the life of Jesus is at work in you. The cross comes to us in many ways and in whichever way it comes we are to take it up and get the courage from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 12:20-28: Greeks comes to see Jesus after Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus tells here that we cannot see Him without the cross. “Unless a carnal of wheat falls and dies in the ground it remains alone but if dies it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it; whoever serves me must follow me.” Cross is central to see Jesus. Cross comes to us with a tremendous opportunity of seeing

Jesus more clearly, brightly and strongly; and the cross comes to us with a challenging choice- 'what shall I say, Father save me from this hour.' And there is an also opportunity for us to say with Jesus 'no for this purpose I have come to this hour, Father glorify thy name.' when Jesus said this there came a voice from heaven saying, "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again."

Heavenly assurance of carrying the cross: When we struggle to get away from the cross and ask God to take away the cross from us, we cannot hear any voice from heaven. Only when we are obedient to take up the cross and say 'Father glorify thy name', then comes the assurance, confidence, courage and the joy of being together with the Father. The pinnacle of praise should come in the midst of our heart ache, loss and struggle on the basis that our God is in heaven and He does what He pleases and this is the way of cross. Jesus praised God in the midst of his intense hour of pain about the cross.

Matthew 26:26-56: In his struggle, as He faces the cross, Jesus drew his disciples into the struggle. He taught them how to face the cross that night in the extremity of his pain in the garden of Gethsemane. Through his own personal life He demonstrated the disciples how to bear the cross which the disciples had to face after Jesus in their own lives. We can learn three things which are revealed in this passage regarding the courage of Jesus

1. Courage of Jesus in facing the cross reveals his submission and obedience to scripture: In v 31 of this passage Jesus quotes from the scriptures –'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered-Zachariah 13:6, 7.' Later Jesus says that what all was happening was according to the scriptures. Jesus' courage was anchored by the scriptures. Hebrews 5 describes the surrender of Jesus graphically that he cried out with loud cries and tears to Him who is able to deliver him from death. He learned obedience through his suffering. We are not going to face and exercise this sort of intense courage that the cross will and does demand of us unless we are anchored by that kind of commitment of scripture. Holding on to the scripture makes a difference in our lives by giving the courage to face the challenges of life through submission and self-denial. If we lose hold on the scriptures then we are going to lose take up the cross individually and co-operatively and lose our fruitfulness because there is no fruitfulness without the cross.

2. Courage of the cross reveals the weakness of Peter: Peter always responded to Jesus in self reliance, zeal and pride that he would follow Jesus anywhere at any cost, that he wants to wash the feet of Jesus. And Jesus said him that he is going to deny him three times before the rooster crows and that if Jesus does not wash his feet, Peter would not have part with Him. Peter denied Jesus and did exactly what Jesus said and realized in the later part of his life that as a human being he was not able to keep his promises because he relied on his own strength. It was not Peter who kept his promises but it was Jesus who kept the promises; He prayed for the disciples, washed their feet, and carried the cross for them and for us. We don't have the courage if we rely on ourselves, on our promises to God, our zeal and commitment to the Lord. But if we rely on His strength, his cross, his promises to us, He will never fail us. He who believes in Him will never be put to shame. Following Jesus to the cross destroys self reliance, pride and self confidence.

3. Courage of the cross reveals the importance of surrender in prayer: Jesus in order to go to the cross needed to get on his knees, pray and plead, pour his heart, agonize and surrender his will to the father. This was the pattern of his life. Luke 5:16 says that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. We are not going to have the same courage of the cross in life without repeated coming to the father in prayer in surrender.

In discipleship and in following Jesus we will not have the courage to take up the cross unless we have the authority of scripture, realize our weakness and rely on God's strength and surrender ourselves in submission to Him in prayer. As we tend to slip and drift away from the word of God and from times of

prayer, gradually we slip away from the cross and start making easy choices. We start compromising at little things and withdraw from surrenders. The sufferings become a source of complaining and groaning instead of becoming a source to take us into the deeper relationship with the Lord. We can even shrink back from the cost of ministry.

Everyday, week, month and year, we as disciples of the Lord are going to face the cross until we see Him face to face. And we need the courage of Jesus to take up the cross in our daily lives. we should ask God to make us men and women of courage- courage to take initiative, courage to lead and most of all courage to take up the cross every day. We need to rededicate our lives to the Lord and rely on His strength and pray for His strength to do the things on a daily basis for His glory.