

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 9- Luke 9:23-26

171- The Characteristics of Saving Faith- Part 5

July 29, 2012

Luke 9:23-26

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.

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*

To the Glory of God

Now over the last four weeks- we have been examining the Words of Jesus in this Passage to discover exactly what Jesus meant by what He said here. And we have discovered a very important item called, "Saving Faith"- the kind of faith that initially empowers a lost person to believe and be saved and a faith that allows and compels that saved person to *keep on* believing after he is saved.

We have also learned that Saving Faith is a gracious gift from God to those elected for Salvation from before the foundation of the world. Saving Faith is *not* inherent in the fallen human being- it *doesn't* naturally and normally flow forth from a human soul absent a Sovereign Move of God the Holy Spirit.

And we have also learned that Saving Faith doesn't stop after Forgiveness is given and Salvation is issued- but that it *continues* to work inside the heart and mind of the saved person- to the point where

that person will fulfill the four Characteristics that Jesus talks about in this Passage:

- ✓ He will come after Jesus
- ✓ He will deny himself
- ✓ He will take up his cross daily
- ✓ He will follow Jesus

So we see that:

- ✓ Being saved and walking with God are the same thing
- ✓ Serving Christ and being born again by Christ are the same thing
- ✓ Bearing fruit and being redeemed are the same thing

These are simply different ways to express the very same Truth. The Bible teaches that a saved person walks with God and those who walk with God for any length of time- are saved. If you are saved- you will serve the Lord and if you serve the Lord- it is because you have been gloriously and wondrously and eternally saved. And so that also means conversely that if you do *not* serve the Lord- that you are *not* saved- but are only deceived into *thinking* that you are saved.

Now it is true that serving God does not *cause* or *bring about* or *produce* Salvation- we cannot *earn* a place in Heaven by what we do for ourselves- but a person who has been truly regenerate by the Sovereign Move of God's Spirit *reflects* or *responds* to that Sovereign Salvation by automatically loving God and the things of God and a truly born again soul will *naturally* and *normally* pursue after God and pursue after Truth and pursue after holiness and will desire and seek and labor to live a life in accord with God's Will and God's Word precisely because he has that new Divine nature.

And he can't help it- it isn't his fault- he certainly can't take any credit for it- he is not entitled to any glory for doing so- it is all because God has Sovereignly and miraculously and supernaturally transformed his sinful, rebellious, fallen, and radically ruined nature into one that is Divine. And now all of his loves and wants and desires have changed. And thus all of his choices and the acts of his will reflect those new and holy loves and desires.

That is what Jesus is teaching here in this Passage that our brother just read to us. So the notion that is so popular in the modern Church that *some* saved people go on with the Lord into actually serving Him and following Him and obeying Him- while others- who are equally saved- do not- is a myth- it isn't true; it is a lie; the Bible does not teach it. So Salvation and Discipleship are the same thing and following Jesus and being saved are the same thing. Or to say it in the words of our text- looking at verse 23,

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

Now we have already covered three of the four Characteristics of Saving Faith but I want to quickly review them before we go over the fourth one. So the first three are:

1. They will come after Jesus
2. They will deny themselves
3. They will take up their cross daily

Let's look again at **Luke 9:23**:

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

Now the very heart and soul of the Biblical Gospel, as Jesus and the Apostles preached it is that God will grant Saving Faith to every elected sinner and with that gracious gift of faith- that unworthy wicked transgressor will have the faith to repent and believe the Gospel and be saved. God will mercifully pardon his transgressions and God will impute the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ to him which will allow him entrance into Heaven

But that Salvation which is initially brought about by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone will then empower and enable that person to pursue a deep, real life of self-denial, cross bearing, and submission to the Lord Christ.

So the effort in by many in the modern Church to separate Salvation from Obedience; to separate Jesus as Savior from Jesus as

Lord; that seeks to separate Believing from Obeying; that separates Justification from Sanctification is a disjointed disconnected false and unbiblical effort. It is a tragically unbiblical distinction. In fact, it's "a Gospel Scandal". Sinners are told today that if they want to be saved and go to heaven- they just need to "accept Jesus Christ"- accept the fact that He died for them. They just need to "ask Jesus to come into their hearts", or "invite Jesus in". These are common unbiblical phrases which do nothing but dilute the Gospel.

Very little is ever said in the modern Church about how lost people have to view themselves as wicked transgressors of the Law and what is required of them after they are saved.

So the Divine Call to Salvation is a Call to full surrender; a Call to complete death to self and sin; a radical life- long commitment; a joyful sacrifice; and a fearless obedience- without any regard for what that surrender; death; sacrifice; service or obedience will do to the individual.

Now I've heard so many crazy, strange, bizarre, wacky views of what this really means. People say, *"Your lousy job is your cross; or your mother-in-law is your cross; or your boss is your cross; or your car is your cross; or your leaky faucet is your cross; or your wayward teenager is your cross. Everything these days that is uncomfortable or that inconveniences you in the least is now your cross."* But listen to me- we can't read all that into this Passage. We can't add all that to the Bible. If you were listening to Jesus on the day that He actually said these words- and you were standing in the crowd that day and you heard the Lord say,

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

What do you think would be the first thing that would pop into your mind? After all- Jesus wasn't conducting a "Deeper Life Class" here. You would remember your history and you would remember that a hundred years before Jesus ever walked on earth- King Alexander Janius crucified 800 rebels at Jerusalem while he was feasting in public. You would know that Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greek ruler during the inner-testamental period had also crucified many Jews for a revolt that followed the death of Herod of the Great. And you would

know that the proconsul Varus crucified two thousand Jews in broad daylight.

It is said that the Romans crucified a total of thirty-thousand Jews in Palestine during the era around the life of Jesus. So when Jesus said "**Take up your cross daily**"- the Jews who actually heard Him say those words knew exactly what He meant.

They only thought of one thing- a horrible, slow, suffering, and an excruciatingly painful death. Jesus is saying that this is how extreme your devotion to Him has to be in order to know that you are genuinely saved. You must be willing to endure persecution; willing to endure hatred, hostility, rejection, reproach, shame, suffering- even agonizing death- all to have Jesus and all to have true Salvation.

These people knew exactly what Jesus was talking about. And then Jesus added the qualifier to the end when He said, "**daily**". So Saving Faith is so powerful; so strong; so utterly consuming that it enables and empowers 100% of those who are saved to be ready to do take up their cross at a moment's notice- every day.

Now who in the world would ever give a Gospel presentation like that? Well, the Lord Jesus did. And the Apostles did and so should we. Who would dare to stand up before a big stadium full of people and say, *"How many of you are so amazed at God's Grace in Jesus Christ that He has become so glorious; so precious; so beautiful; so worthy so satisfying and fulfilling that living in the best palace on earth; driving the best chariot; eating the finest food; having all your needs met; having all your desires granted and obtaining all your ambitions and achieving all your dreams looks like skubalon in comparison?"*

But that's what Jesus is saying here. He is requiring all those who come to Him to literally slay yourself- that we cast all of our dreams, hopes, desires, ambitions, plans aside and we embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Master- and to live our lives with absolute abandon to the radical Love of Jesus Christ.

And if that means that we live in relative peace and safety and security- then may God be praised and if that means that we suffer and are persecuted and that we die- then may God be praised. It really doesn't matter anymore because God has Sovereignly opened our eyes to our own wretched condition and our own inherent sinfulness and the result is that we are so desperate to obtain merciful forgiveness and so desperate to obtain gracious Salvation- that whatever price we must

pay in this life should be just fine. I mean what's our options here- stay lost and go to hell?

Believe me, the Jews were familiar with crucifixion. It had been carried out in their own land; it was carried out down in Egypt; it was carried out in Persia and western Asia and even in parts of Italy for many centuries. Very often the condemned person would carry a piece of the cross- the shorter cross-piece- which was still very heavy and bulky and they would be forced to drag the whole thing to their own crucifixion. So the imagery here in Jesus's Words is extremely vivid. What He's talking about is *not* a pleasant thought. This is not a "*Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life*" kind of Evangelism here. This is about carrying a cross- the very cross on which you yourself may be executed on. So this is not about somehow identifying in some spiritual sense with the Death of Jesus. The message here that Jesus is giving is:

- ✓ I will Sovereignly forgive all your sins
- ✓ I will Sovereignly impute My Own Righteousness to you
- ✓ I will Sovereignly write My Law on your heart
- ✓ I will Sovereignly grant you the gift of being able to love Me forever
- ✓ I will Sovereignly dwell inside you
- ✓ I will adopt you into My Family
- ✓ I will mold and shape you into My Image
- ✓ You will spend eternity with Me
- ✓ You will be rejected
- ✓ You will be persecuted
- ✓ You will be cast out
- ✓ You will suffer
- ✓ I will never leave you nor forsake you

Jesus said in **John 15:18-21**:

18 If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.

19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

Please turn quickly with me to **Matthew 10-** to see what Jesus also said about this. **Matthew 10:24-39:**

24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

25 "It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!

26 "Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

27 "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear *whispered in your ear*, proclaim upon the housetops.

28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 "So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

33 "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

35 "For I came to *SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;*

36 *and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.*

37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Now this is a radical exclusive love which focuses solely on the Person of Jesus Christ and alienates and separates every other kind of love for everything and everybody else. And this is the Love that Jesus said that you must have for Him if you are to be saved and forgiven and go to Heaven.

So realize this- if you come to Jesus for Salvation- you're going to have to confess Him before men and you're going to have to confess Jesus before men knowing that doing that could cost you your freedom; it could cost you years of your life imprisonment; it could cost you hatred and alienation and it even could cost you your life through martyrdom.

So, this whole matter of following Jesus is sort of saying "*no*" to self and "*no*" to safety. I'm willing to bear the reproach of Christ. I'm willing to suffer the consequence of what it means to be a Christian in the environment that I'm in. And this is a message that is clearly understood by people in many parts of the world. There are more Christians today being martyred than ever in history by the tens of thousands every year- mostly under Muslim regimes.

And in spite of the great persecution; and in spite of the great personal suffering that these believers endure as they preach the Gospel and live for Jesus- there is absolutely no equivocation with them about this- they know what it means to name the Name of Christ. They knew it in the years of communist oppression in Eastern Europe- they knew exactly what it would cost. But the Gospel was so precious; Christ Himself was so precious; eternal life was so important; forgiveness of sin was so valuable that they were actually eager and anxious to pay whatever it cost them. And that has been the collective testimony of believers for 2,000 consecutive years.

And here is the kicker. You *cannot* do this and you *will not* do this unless you have been given the ability to see yourself like God sees you. And that is why understanding what the Bible says about Total Human Depravity is so important. You will have no desire to suffer with joy and no desire to endure through great persecution; no desire at all to live for Jesus when it costs you everything unless and until you have

seen your own wickedness and seen your own inherent sinfulness and understood that you *deserve* eternal damnation for your sins- and the only reason you are not going to spend eternity in hell with the devil and his angels is because God wondrously and mercifully and graciously rescued you.

He didn't have to; you certainly weren't worthy of it; and you don't deserve it; But Mercy re-wrote your life and Grace caught your falling soul. God wasn't obligated in any way to deliver you- and yet He did- for no other reason other than it pleased God to do so. So how much is that worth to you? How valuable is that? How important is it to you that God has given you the distinct honor and the high privilege to be able to be forgiven and to love and serve Him forever! How dramatically has that knowledge changed your heart?

And when you have received that Divine Revelation- all the suffering in the world cannot rob you of your joy; all the persecution in the world cannot steal your love and all the injustice heaped upon you cannot take away one ounce of peace- because your sins have been forgiven and you're going to go to Heaven forever and Jesus is glorious.

So dear friends- we must know that part of what it means to be saved is that God gives us the understanding that there isn't anything in this life that can be given or that can be taken away that can even begin to be compared to the infinite Worth and the eternal Value and the Excellency and the Beauty and the Majesty of Jesus Christ. And that includes any suffering that might come our way in this life. Please turn with me to **Romans 8:18:**

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Now compare that with the silly, ridiculous self- serving messages of the modern Church- *"Come to Jesus because God wants to make you happy, healthy, and wealthy and Jesus died to help you fulfill all your dreams and so you can score more touchdowns."*

What we *need* to teach and preach is that Jesus wants your life and He may even require your death. Saving Faith enables and empowers us to be able and willing to echo the testimony of the Apostle Paul when he said to the Ephesians Elders in **The Acts 20: 22b-24:**

22 ... I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

And to say what he said in **Philippians 1:21:**

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And what he said again in **The Acts 20:24**

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

So Paul says, *"I don't live anymore- Christ lives in Me and if I live at all- I live to the Lord. If I die- I die to the Lord- so whether I live or die- I am the Lord's.* And Paul didn't say that because he was a great man or because he was brave or because he was an Apostle. No, Paul made those statements simply because he was saved- because those are the terms of true genuine Salvation for everybody.

So a public profession of Christ as Lord and Savior may cost something- but it's also a proof of our genuineness. Being saved may cost me my family- a sword may go between the members of my family over the Gospel- but Jesus said He came to bring a sword. That's the Gospel.

And so genuinely saved people don't have any self-interests that come before or that overrule our need for Christ. Do you understand that? We don't have *any* self-interests- we don't have any ambitions- any plans any dreams; any hopes; any desires; any loves that overrule or that come before our desperate need for Jesus Christ and the Salvation that He alone brings.

And when you have this holy desperation- you can say, *"If I have to die every day- then that's fine because that's a small price to pay*

because God said that the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which awaits me in Christ."

Now understand, dear friends that all suffering in this life is not for Jesus or for the sake of the Gospel and does not qualify as the kind of suffering that Jesus is talking about here. Some people suffer because they are irresponsible. Others suffer because they have been foolish with things that God has blessed them with. Others suffer because they are sinning and got caught. That is not what Jesus is talking about here.

The suffering that Jesus is talking about here is the suffering that comes as a result of the reproach of Jesus Christ. That's the cross Jesus is talking about- it's suffering for the sake of the Gospel- and it is part of being saved.

So are you willing to suffer for the Gospel? Have you counted the cost and judged Christ and His Kingdom and His Will and His Way and His Word and His Truth and His Presence and His Glory to be worth suffering for? Jesus said it is if you are truly saved. And then you understand that there won't be any crown at all for you unless there's first a cross.

So if you're coming to Christ and you're not saying to yourself, *"Eternal life, the life to come, the forgiveness of sin and what God has prepared for me in heaven is so precious to me and so valuable to me and I'm so disgusted with what I am that I am willing to give up everything I have because nothing on the face of this earth has any value compared to Jesus and I am willing, if necessary, to bear the full reproach of Jesus Christ- no matter what it costs, even if it costs my life."* That's what Jesus says here and that is what He means.

So, this is a very serious Call here. It will cost you. But the Bible says that the willingness we have to accept the cross because of the joy that is set before us is what marks a true disciple of Jesus Christ. You take up the cross and you take it up as a way of life- a daily way of life. The old hymn writer knew about this when he wrote:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me.
The consecrated cross I'll bear, till death shall set me free
And then go home my crown to wear for there's a crown for me

So, you know, you look at your life and you say, *"Oh, it doesn't matter what my life is to me. I'm thankful for the life the Lord gave me. I'm even more thankful for the death that ushers me into the next life. Whatever the cost, whatever I have to give up of myself I eagerly give up because I've come to the end of myself and I found that I have no value. I'm crying out to be rescued like a drowning man who isn't debating on what the terms are going to be after he gets out of the water."*

And then finally- we come to the fourth Characteristic of true genuine Saving Faith and that is found at the end of **Luke 9:23**:

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

The 4th Characteristic of Saving Faith is: "They Will Follow Me"

Now literally in the Greek it says:

"Let him be following Me."

So this too- like denying self and taking up the Cross is an *ongoing* continual pattern of obedience and service and worship and devotion. Your will is out and His Will is in. You go where Jesus says to go; you say what Jesus wants you to say; you live in accord with what Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus put into the NT Epistles and you do what Jesus says to do.

You know, in **Matthew 7**- this whole matter of obedience is at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount and in **Matthew 7:21** Jesus said:

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

So it's the "doers"- not the "sayers" who are truly born again. It's the people who strive to obey- certainly not perfectly- but honestly who are saved and *not* those who always have reasons and excuses as to why they don't obey. It is those who have been empowered and enabled to love and serve Jesus Christ- those who have had the tyrannical power

of sin broken over their lives and those who have the indwelling Holy Spirit walking in them- those are the ones who are genuinely saved. And if you have all that- you will follow Jesus.

Saving Faith doesn't simply allow you to trust in Jesus initially so that God can forgive you- only to then turn you lose so that you can do your own thing. That isn't true Salvation. That is deception. No, Saving Faith empowers and enables you to initially believe to be saved so that you may then be free from the power of sin so that you may love and serve and obey Jesus Christ- all the way through this life and on into the next.

And, of course, the Gospel of John is just loaded with this kind of emphasis where Jesus talks about how true Saving Faith is made manifest in obedience. And I can't take you through all of them- but **John 14:21** is a great one. There Jesus said:

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

And in **John 15:10**- Jesus said:

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

And just in case you begin to be offended or put off because you think that obeying Jesus' Commandments is nothing but dry dusty stale religious legalism- the very next verse says:

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

So the Salvation that begins with Grace and Faith alone doesn't end there- but it transforms into a loving and humble life of joyful service and an obedience that is born of genuine gratefulness for all that Jesus has done in forgiving you of all your sins and of rescuing you from the Wrath of God.

So at the end- Salvation is all about obedience and it's *a/ways* been about obedience- *a/ways* about following. So Lordship isn't an option- obedience isn't optional. Obedience to what Jesus said comes

from a heart that truly love Who Jesus is. And all I'm telling you in this series is that- that is what true Salvation is.

So, you're coming, you're saying, *"I'm at the end of myself- I'm going to hell; I'm lost and depraved and cannot save myself. Have Mercy on me a sinner and forgive me and save me from Your Wrath. I despise my sin and my rebellion towards You and desire to give You my life- no matter what the cost. Just show me what You want me to do, and I'll do it."*

And that is the right attitude at the point of conversion. *"What do I do now? I'm done, I'm willing to die for You and live for You, I want to follow You, so what do I do?"* And that puts you in a position then to submit yourself to all this. So ultimately Salvation is all about submission. It's a life pattern of self-denial, cross-bearing, bearing the reproach of Christ and loyal faithful and joyful obedience.

Now at this point I don't want to be criticized for saying something I'm not saying- so let me clarify something as I close. What I'm *not* saying is that in order to be accepted by God in the first place as a lots sinner- that somehow you have to deny yourself on your own and get that in motion and then you deny yourself for a little while and then kind of move toward being willing to give your life for Jesus and then you move into loyal obedience to the things of God. And if you do all that- then God will see all your effort and out of gratefulness for all that your doing in your own strength and power- God will come down and save you. That is not what I'm saying. That doesn't happen.

No, please listen to this very carefully. This little complex of spiritual realities are not chronological. Jesus is not teaching here that you do one for a little while and then after a lapse of time- you perform another one of these things for a little while, and then after another lapse of time- you start doing another one so you can earn Salvation. That isn't what Jesus is saying at all- that is not what I'm preaching here.

These Characteristics are not chronological. They're simply a blend. These are the logical components of saving faith that believes in Jesus as Lord and Christ and believes in Jesus as the crucified and risen Savior and that bears this attitude within that faith. These things all go together. They are a complex that goes together.

The second thing I want you to understand is, not only are they not something chronological but they're not something you muster up. You can't do any of this in your own power.

In your own power- you naturally and normally love yourself, you protect yourself, and you do what you want- you do what is in your own best interest. That's how all fallen people function. So something has to happen dramatically in you before you can ever be saved. God has to move on you first or else you would never come to the reality that your even lost. So there has to be a Sovereign shattering of all of your sense of self- worth and pride and arrogance. There has to be a devastation of what you are normally, and it can't come from you, it's got to come externally- from *outside* of you. And this is the mighty Sovereign Work of God the Holy Spirit- Who moves into the life of a lost person and convicts that person of sin and shatters that person's self-confidence and brings spiritual life to that person who was dead in trespasses and sin. And it births you the second time- it resurrects you to new life and with that new spiritual life- the lost person begins to see and begins to hear, and begins to understand and with Saving faith- he believes the Gospel and repents and God mercifully and graciously forgives him and saves him. So this is the mighty Sovereign Work of God.

So, when you go to preach the Gospel and you begin to rationalize and you say, "*Oh, boy, if I do it the Biblical Way- nobody is going to respond.*" And out of fear of rejection- you become ashamed of the Gospel and so you water it down or you hide parts of it or you minimize the "Bad News" or you try to make it sound as though Christ will never make any demands on their lives or that serving Christ and obeying Christ is secondary or even optional and that all they need to do is pray a prayer and God will be stuck with them throughout all eternity- then realize this- you are now part of the problem and you are not preaching the Gospel and you are standing in the way of sinners coming to the Lord and you are a reproach to the Gospel and you are a hindrance to true Salvation.

Listen to me. It doesn't matter what age we live in or how technologically advanced we are or how educated we are or how financially well off we are- everybody's problem is still the same- they are lost and dead in trespasses and sins and God has chosen one single way to bring new spiritual life to the dead lost sinner and that is by preaching the Gospel to them.

And we are to preach the Biblical Gospel- not another gospel. And we are to sow the true seed and we realize that nobody can respond to the Gospel in their own power anyway. It takes God to Sovereignly interrupt their plans and their lives and it takes God to invade their minds and hearts and to overpower their natural and normal resistance to the Truth and it takes God to Sovereignly give them eyes to see and ears to hear and to take out of them a stony heart and give them a heart of flesh anyway or nobody would ever be convicted; nobody would ever repent; and nobody would ever be saved.

So you might as well do God's Business God's Way so that they have the true message and if they are being prompted by the Spirit of God- they will believe and repent and be saved.

So you want to be a follower of Jesus, do you? Well, say farewell to yourself, pick up your cross and proceed to do everything He asks you to do. Those are the terms.

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

Let's pray.