

Two Crosses of Christianity

By Jeff Noblit

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Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.
Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

All right, Mark 8 beginning in verse 28 we'll go, uh, verse, uh, 27 rather and go through verse 38. Mark 8:27,

27 Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." 29 And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ." 30 And He warned them to tell no one about Him. 31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." 34 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. 35 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. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? 37 For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

I've entitled this the "Two Crosses of Christianity." You may have been asked before, "Why does your church have two crosses on the steeple? Why do you have two crosses on your signs and on your literature?" Well, for this simple reason: if there are not two crosses, then there's no Christianity. You see, if you have Christ's cross, you still have Christ, but if you don't have someone else taking up their cross to follow Christ, you don't have Christianity. Christ has his cross that he died on, that he gave himself fully so that his church would be redeemed, and then the Bible teaches we saints have our cross. Now we don't carry Christ's cross, we carry our cross.

Uh, it wasn't too long ago, I, I saw a fella going down the road and you've seen some of these guys and he was carrying a big old wooden cross and he, I don't know where all they go, some of these guys go all the way across the country and I'm not saying that that's diametrically wrong but I am saying this, that old wooden cross has already been carried quite well. That part's finished. And carrying our cross today doesn't literally mean we're to take up a beam of wood and drag it across town, and actually they cheat a little bit, the ones I've seen have a wheel on the bottom of the cross so if you, man, if you gonna suffer and carry it, carry the whole thing. But, um, then again, these brothers may mean well and I don't want to be deriding of them, but my point is the Savior's cross is the Savior's cross and he did what he was to do there, now we have our cross and that's what this text points out so clearly.

So let's talk, first of all, about I. The Savior's cross verses 27 through 33. The Bible tells us here he's, Jesus in verse 27, is, uh, going along with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. The setting here is that this is an area at the base of Mount Hermon. It was ruled by Herod Phillip. It had a glorious marble temple dedicated to Caesar Augustus. It was a place, if you will, dedicated to the glory of Rome but Rome's been gone for a long long time. I think what a contrast that the glory of Jesus keeps shining forth and will forever. It was a mountain slope area and this was probably a good place for Jesus to do some training and get away from a lot of the crowds and avoid maybe some of the harassment of the Jewish religious authorities, and here's where he's going to bring out, the text says very plainly that he's going to die on a cross, and also he's going to bring out very plainly that you are gonna have to carry your cross also.

So that's the setting. Now subpoint A under the Savior's cross, notice the mistaken conclusions of the "natural" man. The natural being the unsaved man, the man that may be just merely religious, the man that may be just a church member but never truly saved or born again, or any man in the culture. You know, everybody's got a conclusion about Jesus, everybody's got a conclusion about what Christianity is, and the natural man always comes up with the wrong or with false conclusions about that. Here we have the same thing in verse 28 and it says, and "They told Him, saying, 'Well, people say you're John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; others, one of the prophets.'" Previous verse Jesus says, "Who are people saying that I am?" And they said, "Man, it, it's good news, Jesus. They think You're wonderful. They think You're Elijah or John the Baptist or one of the other great prophets of God." Well, there's only one problem with that, if somebody says you remind them of Elijah, that's probably a compliment but it's not a compliment to the Son of God and God the Son. There's only one like him and that's him. He's to be lumped in categories with no one else.

And isn't it just like that today, I mean, literally for 2,000 years we have a myriad of people in the world who know something of Jesus but they don't know Jesus. They, um, as the Bible says, do not have ears to hear. They're blinded and do not have eyes to see the truth. The liberals of theological schools and liberal pastors for years have taught such unbiblical nonsense that Jesus maybe was just a good teacher, he was a good example, well, he lived unselfishly so he taught us how to live and he taught us how to love, but they want to stop way short of saying he is the substitutionary atonement for man's sins,

and they want to stop way short of saying that he's literally God of very God, he's God incarnate. Some will go as far as to say, "Well, you know, the reason why Jesus, um, would walk around and claim that He's God in the flesh was because He was mentally ill and He meant well and He helped some people but He had an illness. He had, He was mentally deranged and that's why He goes around saying these things." But you see, all of this stuff about what people say about Christ and who people deem Christ to be, and quite honestly I get very weary of the Jesus of country music and the Jesus of Hollywood where they bend him like a pretzel into some form or shape that fits their own sin and their own subjective narrative or philosophy of life.

But all this can be easily cleared up by stopping the speculation and reading the revelation. You see, your speculation without revelation is an abomination and we can remove the speculations and the abominations by just staying faithful to the revelation, and on these we stand, amen? Men's emotions and this, again this nonsense of our present age where everybody has their own truth. What are they actually saying? They're saying, "We're God and we need no other. I am God so what I feel is right. It's my truth." And so we have the bizarre insanity, the vileness of, of all of these things in our culture of boys claiming to be girls, and girls boys, and, and calling sex between like genders as acceptable and good and honorable. It's, it's just vile and here's my point: once you leave God's big rules, what is man, what is woman, what is marriage, what is right, what is wrong, when you leave God's big rules and you start down that funnel, son, there's no place to stop. Where's this stuff gonna end? Well, we'll end in total destruction of our country or a great revival back to God. One of the two. One of the two. I'll tell you where I'm gonna be, I'm gonna be in God's church, doing God's stuff, God's way, for God's glory, amen? I'm gonna be in the oasis of sanity and, God help us, too many of our churches are chasing some of these tangents too.

Nobody ever said it better than the Oxford don C. S. Lewis, who after his conversion to Christ, of course, he taught at Oxford and he was surrounded by radicals and liberals, and he said, "Let's be done with all this nonsense that Jesus was just a good moral teacher and a good example." He said, "A good moral teacher doesn't walk around everywhere claiming to be God," and that's where he came up with his conclusion saying, "Well, you can call Him a lunatic, He was crazy, you can call Him a liar, or you can call Him Lord but that's the only options you have." A good man doesn't go around lying and claiming to be God. C. S. Lewis was right.

Albert Hubbard said, "Public opinion is the judgment of the incapable many opposed to that of the discerning few." And that's so true. Well, these people of today and not with wickedness but it's just been common throughout the ages, "Well, we think Jesus is this, He's Elijah or, or You're John the Baptist, or You're the prophet." Well, that's not sufficient.

So we come to number 2. First, first of all, we saw the, the mistaken conclusions of the natural man, now notice the settled convictions of the true disciple. A true disciple doesn't stop at Jesus is a great man, or a good man, or a good teacher, or somebody we can learn from, he asked them in, in verse 29, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter

hits a home run last part of verse 29, he said to him, "You are the Christ." That's the Greek for Savior, uh, or the anointed one. The, the Hebrew equivalent is Messiah and I use the word Messiah because this is a Jewish context and these are Jewish people overwhelmingly so who are following Jesus. The apostles were Jewish men and, um, when Jesus asked those folks, "Who do you say that I am?" They're basically saying, "You are the promised Messiah. You're not just a prophet, You're the Messiah. There's only one of those and that's who You are. That's where we stand." And for us today the parallel would be, "He is my Lord and He is my Savior. He is the Lord and the Savior. There's no other. But He's also personally my Lord and my Savior." That's the settled conclusion of a true disciple. Jesus is not one of several people we follow. He's the only one we follow. He's not one of several good teachers or moral instructors or, or, or, or exemplary, uh, philosophers. He is our Lord and our Savior.

Peter says it very very well, "You are the Messiah." You know, true believers always willing whenever necessary to fly in the face of public opinion and openly express a conviction that is contrary to the masses. Now we're gonna see, it's gonna be unveiled very clearly here that these guys didn't understand everything yet. They, they understood but they still had a long way to go. They're kinda like Apollos that we see later in the book of Acts who, who loved the Lord and was doing right but he had some blindness about his theology and his doctrine and the Bible says Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and taught him the things of God more accurately. Well, that's sorta where these guys are, they're not finished and, by the way, we're not finished, we're all still learning and growing. We hold Christ to be the one true prophet of God who gives us the truth of God, who is the truth of God. He is the one true priest of God, who is the mediator and the, the one who connects us sinful men with a holy God, the only one who can do that. And he is the one true king that we bow to as Sovereign and as Lord. That's what Peter meant when he said, "You're the Messiah."

Now verse 30. We see this several times in the gospels, "And He warned them," strictly admonished, "to tell no one about Him." Now we all know what the problem is here. The reason why Jesus said, "Okay, that's right but don't say anything about it," not that Jesus in any way, shape or fashion somehow is shamed, or, or rejecting the role but the people overwhelmingly wanted him to be the kind of Messiah their subjective natural flesh wanted him to be, and that included free food and free healing for everyone forever. They liked that part. They, they flocked to him for that and, and not to mention also or to mention, let's say, that he is going to be the one who would deliver us from this Roman occupation and oppression. So they had their own human description and definition of what the Messiah was gonna be and Jesus didn't want this great throng of people gathering around him demanding of him to be that. It'd just get in the way of his real mission to go to the cross and redeem his children. So that's why he said, "Don't say anything about that for a while. People are on their own track and it's gonna cause a terrible problem for us as far as what I've been sent here to do."

Now thirdly under the Savior's cross, the startling revelation of a crucified Messiah. The startling revelation of a crucified Messiah. Verse 31, "And He began to teach," it means he begins to unpack and unfold, continuing in verse 31, "that the Son of Man must suffer

many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes," in other words, he's not gonna be gladly received by the religious authorities in Israel, they're gonna hate him and reject him, and then it says, verse 31, last part, "and be killed, and after three days rise again." So up until this time, the text is indicating Jesus had hinted at his coming crucifixion but he hadn't said much about it. Now he's stating the matter plainly and openly before them and this was startling to them, this was shocking to them. They, too, had hoped and believed he would be this political military leader who would overthrow Rome and usher in a, a grand, uh, uh, era of success and prosperity and well-being in Israel. And he'll do that one day but not this coming. But now he's predicted that he'll be rejected by the religious authorities, they'll not welcome him in, and that he'll be killed at, at their hands through the Roman soldiers and the Roman government.

Now, now think, though, of where these guys are, think of the faith they had to have. They heard him preach and they heard him teach and they've decided to follow him, and now he's saying he's gonna go out and be killed. Notice what Peter does in the next verse, I'm sorry, verse 32, "And Peter took Him aside," last part of 32, "and began to rebuke Him." First we have Peter the rock, "You're the Christ. You're the Messiah." Right on. Peter's batting a thousand. Then he turns right around and, and can you, can you picture such a thing that he's rebuking the Son of God and God the Son to his face. We know from other gospel writers, he's saying this, this very phrase, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You! You're not gonna die! We're, we're, about something great and glorious and good and that's not the way to get it done, Jesus. Jesus, if You'll just sit down here, we can help You get this Messiah thing squared away." Basically where they are. Boy, I've seen many a young pastor go to churches and follow the Scriptures, sure they're not perfect and, sure, they're shortsighted, but some old mossback deacon will rise up and oppose him without any biblical authority just saying, "You just don't know, you don't know how it works around here, son." It doesn't matter how it works around here, it's a matter of what Jesus says about it. That's what matters.

This has been a problem forever, we want to do Jesus' work but we want to do it our way. We want to be involved in the work of the church but we want to be involved in the work of the church and do it by our methods, by our ingenuity, by our cleverness and creativities and not by what God says. G. Campbell Morgan said, "The man who lives for Jesus but shuns God's methods is a stumblingblock." That's why in our core convictions we say all the time, glory of God-focused, Christ-honoring, and Bible-saturated. That means biblical methods only. If we look at the Scriptures, what do we do as a church. If we look at the Scriptures what do we do as a wife and, and mother. If we look to the Scriptures what do we do as a husband and a father, and, and an employer, or whatever it might be. We don't get to just cash in our ticket to heaven and then say, "Okay, now I get to have my own subjective, uh, niche in Christianity." No, you don't. You're to do God's work, God's way, for God's glory. So this has been the problem all along.

Now verse 33 shows us how the Lord responded, "But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" So Jesus' counter-rebuke to Peter was prompt and decisive and force, forceful. He didn't pull a punch and he didn't dilly-dally for a moment.

This, this was very essential for the other disciples and members of the crowd to see that he was not going to let this thinking go any further in his newly formed church here, this ecclesia, this gathering together of disciples.

On this point and in this area, Peter had not risen above the level of ordinary natural men and that's why Jesus says to him, "You're Satan." He didn't mean you're literally Satan, of course. He doesn't even mean you literally belong to Satan but here's what he means, "This is the kinda stuff Satan's putting in people's minds, get it out of your mind." Satan is always about love Jesus but have your own unbiblical Jesus you love. Devote yourself to Christ but have a less than thoroughly biblical view of who Christ is and what our, our role is in following this Christ. Satan's always been behind that so he says, "You're, you're acting like Satan, Peter. Get out of the way."

By faith we obey God's methods as we do God's work and we never allow our decisions to be based on human emotion. And I say this rather pointedly but I say it to myself rather pointedly, if someone says to me, "Now, pastor, I just don't feel da, da, da, da, da." And I, I think, I say, at least I think I say it sometimes, "I don't care how you feel. I've got 8-900 people out there who feel stuff. We don't have time to find out how everybody feels." We hadn't got this, I've been your pastor for 40 years or a part of the pastoral staff for 40 years, we haven't got this done yet to get to all your feelings or all Jeff's feelings. That's why our world is so chaotic and contradictory and nonsensical, everybody's become their own god, as the Bible says, everybody does what's right in their own eyes. There's only one problem that if you're going to be a society, there has to be a core set of, of convictions and principles we all agree on or we can't function together. And they talk about pluralism in our culture, you know, you understand there's no such thing as pluralism. When, when, when, when you call a society a pluralistic society, all it's doing is moving from one dominant worldview to a contrary dominant worldview; you're just in the process of moving and it looks pluralistic but it's gonna land on one and ours is gonna land on a humanistic God-less worldview in our country. Well, I keep chasing that rabbit and don't need to chase that rabbit any further. I need to get back over here.

You know, Satan really doesn't mind you being a Christian as long as you leave out the cross. That's what Jesus is telling them, "I'm going to a cross." "No, no!" Peter said, "You can't do that!" That's Satan's ploy all the time. Satan is always behind a crossless Christianity. He's always been. Satan does not mind if you honor Jesus as a great teacher. He does not mind if you love Jesus as a great healer. He doesn't mind if you have deep human sentimentality about the story of Jesus. Just leave off the cross and he's okay. Just teach him as this gentle, sweet, loving, meek, humble, caring, helping the oppressed. Oh, Satan loves that but do not preach the doctrine of the cross. Satan hates the cross.

You remember in Matthew 4 where Satan is tempting Jesus and, in effect, here's what he says to Jesus. He said, "Jesus, I'll give You all the kingdoms of the world and You'll be, You'll be Messiah over everything. Jesus, You don't have to do this the heavenly Father's way, You can just follow my plan." Because he's god of the world, the Bible says. He had, he has limited authority over all the kingdoms of the world. "Jesus, I'll give You all the kingdoms of the world if You'll just bow down to me and we'll just skip this whole

cross thing." Didn't say that literally but that's what he means because Satan knows if Jesus goes to the cross, immediately in his powerful vicarious atonement the church is saved and sealed for eternity. Satan was trying to keep him for there because then Satan loses grasp on so many millions of souls when the Savior obeyed the Father's will and went to the cross.

So this is startling to these disciples. They just didn't grasp it yet. They loved him but they didn't grasp it yet. And let's be reminded that Christianity is centered on the literal death of Christ who became a literal sinner in the eyes of the Father and literally received our wrath in our place. If that is not true, we are nothing but another version of man-centered philosophies. But if it is true, then we're to gain great, great, great things. You see, Christianity without the cross is worthless to save. There's no Christianity without the cross just as there's no waterfall without water, there's no wind without air, there's no forest without trees, there's no lightning without electricity. Christianity without a cross is heresy. Heresy. The old liberals used to call it slaughterhouse religion. So be it. I'll cling my hopes on the Savior of the world's bleeding and dying on an old cross paying my sins and appeasing the Father's wrath for me.

Well, that's the Savior's cross, let's go to the saint's cross now. This is the second heavy-duty lesson these guys are gonna learn. First of all, they're learning that Jesus as the Messiah, the centerpiece of his work is to go to Jerusalem and die and rise again. They didn't get the rise again part yet. And then Jesus in verse 34, we, subpoint A will be the absoluteness, the absoluteness of your cross. You see, each one of you have and literally it's a figure of speech, it's, it's a metaphor, a symbol, but we all have many crosses. Now just pause for a moment. Are you carrying yours? I know there's an old gospel song and I know what they mean and I don't mean to be, again, demeaning but, uh, the phrase goes, "It's not always easy carrying Calvary's cross." No, it's not easy, it's impossible. You can't carry that cross. There's only one who could carry that cross but you're to carry your cross.

The verse 34 says he called the crowd and that, I think that's very significant because this just wasn't the inner circle of disciples, this was all of those who might be considering being devoted followers of Jesus Christ. And he said to them, middle of verse 34, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." "If you wish to come in My footsteps and, and be a follower of Mine," first of all, he said, "If anyone," that means anyone can. You may be the poorest of the poor and you can be a follower of Jesus Christ. You may be as chattel slave to a master but you can be a follower of Jesus Christ. You may be the most uneducated and ignorant in all society but you can be a follower of Jesus Christ. You may be the most educated and brilliant person humanly speaking but God can even break your pride and you can be a follower of Jesus Christ. You can come from the wrong side of the tracks or the right side of the tracks but you can be a follower of Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter your skin color, you can be a follower of Jesus Christ. That's why we've never allowed one tiny minutiae of prejudice in this church. You're judged in this church over your love for Christ and the genuineness of your conversion, period, and anybody who loves Christ is welcome here with all of our love. Amen? You know, anybody can come because God's not really

looking for your ability. Your ability doesn't mean much to him. He's looking for your availability. He'd rather have a 12 year old boy that hasn't learned a lot yet, doesn't know a lot yet, but he loves Christ because that boy can say, "I wanna serve Jesus," and make himself fully available and some brilliant older men may have all kinds of things they're hung up on and they're just not available.

Three parts of this that come in. It's one thing but there's three parts here. We'll just talk about them briefly together. Verse 34, he said, "If you're gonna come after Me, you've gotta deny yourself." That's the idea of rejecting self. It's to say no to self. Now it's not self-denial, that's different. Self-denial is occasionally giving up things or activities for a good purpose, that's not what this is talking about. This is saying there's a moment of conversion where you establish a new core conviction and you are a, enabled to establish the core conviction by the new birth where you begin to say, "I no longer look to self as Lord. I no longer look to my feelings and my emotion as the rule of my life. I reject self. I now look to Christ. I surrender to Christ and I determine to obey His will. I once and for all say farewell to self. I once and for all declare that Christ is all-wise and I, myself, am a fool in comparison." All reliance on all things that are mine by nature, any education, any inclinations, any intellectual abilities, false habits, sentimentalities, emotions, all of those, any and all of those that cannot be harmonized with following Christ must be rejected. You started a new course of life when you came to Christ.

Far too often in evangelical circles, we teach Christianity as check a box, get your ticket out of hell, and then main, basically if you don't murder anybody and not too grotesque and vile, you can just spend the rest of your life being a hedonist and enjoying this world. That's a lie. That's not true. That's why Paul said in, uh, Philippians 3:7, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." You go from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered life.

Well, not only then he must deny himself, then it says he must take up his cross. It's an aorist tense. It means take it up all at once and continue carrying it. It means we have chosen, I'm not saying we get up in the morning jumping up and down on our beds excited about it, but we've chosen. There, there's a, an element of, of solid resolve in our hearts that says, "If this costs rejection, if this costs separation from a loved one, if this costs losing my job, if this costs me in sense of ridicule and insults and slanders and underminings, that's my cross to carry and I've resolved that. I've settled that. I'm not going out looking for it but if it comes my way in obeying Christ, so be it." If you very, live very long as a Christian and haven't endured any kind of suffering for it, I'm doubtful of the genuineness of your conversion. Now God in his providence has different roles for different people, none of us are yet being martyred at the stake like our Baptist forefathers were simply for believing in, in true conversion and immersion baptism after conversion, we haven't gotten there yet but who knows how soon.

I charge you, church, this morning to renew, renew the core conviction that if it costs that's fine. And my children and my grandchildren may not can belong to all of the right clubs and all the right groups in the culture any longer, used to we could say maybe 40, 50, 60 years ago that generally the society held to some Christian values, they may not

have lived it out well but at least they agreed with them and our children could kinda go with the society and the school system, we're coming to a day where it's going to be required that God's church be its own subculture because we just don't fit out there.

Now the Bible does say that certainly we have to have social interactions with wicked and evil people. Paul says it this way, he said, "If you don't do that, you'd have to leave the world." I get that but I'm talking about the things you and I choose to go along with. "Pastor, this is a little unsettling." Good. Good. The last thing the church needs to be is at ease in Zion. I don't know that I score 100 but I try to resolve to myself almost daily that, "Lord, if this cost everything I have, fine." I mean, after all, you, you, I couldn't end the journey with any less than I began it with. I've told you before, I had more of nothing than anybody I know when I started in the ministry. I mean, I just had nothing. I had nothing plus nothing. Now Pam had a lot of money. You know, Clifford and Heather are loaded. Bless her heart, she'd, she'd won some, uh, pageant stuff and so we got a little start on some appliances and stuff like that, but I mean, all she got with me was, "Lord, I hope he can bring some money in someday." You know, that was it. I mean, there, that's good in a way, folks, because I've done been there.

Deny yourself and take up your cross. Sometimes as, as an individual Christian in the workplace and the office, at the school, young people, you always be kind and you always be compassionate to everyone but sometimes you have to say, "I've given my life to Christ and I can't do that. I've given my life to Christ and I can't go along with that." "Well, you just think you're holier than us." Here's how you respond, "Oh, no, no, no, I'm more wicked than anybody, that's why I can't be around this stuff." Amen? That's what a Christian should say. "I have the capacity to sin like you have no idea but I don't want to." We don't separate ourselves for evil because we're strong and pure but because we're weak and impure and we want to please our pure Lord.

Sometimes the Bible says very clearly, sometimes you'll lose your marriage because you won't deny Christ. Sometimes you may lose fellowship with a son or a daughter, a mother or a father because you will not deny Christ. That's your cross to bear. He bore his cross on our behalf, we should bear ours on his behalf. You understanding now why there's two crosses in Christianity? Now understand would have missed nothing if he didn't have the church. He's, he's self-sufficient in all that he is by himself but there has to be followers, cross-bearers for there to be Christianity. There's the Savior's cross and the saint's cross.

Well, not only deny yourself which is reject yourself, take up your cross which is reject the world and the values and the principles and the, the vile pleasures, now let, before I go on, let me give a balancing statement because carrying your cross does not mean you're not supposed to enjoy any of the common graces God's given all mankind. I hope you enjoy your lunch but also pagans will enjoy their lunch today and that's in the world and that's good, and there's thousands and thousands of those. God has not said, "You cannot enjoy the, the common graces that I've showed on all mankind." Of course we can. We enjoy our grandchildren. We enjoy a new suit of clothes or whatever it may be. He's not saying that. Matter of fact, I've run into too many of these characters out there who, who want to put on this false humility and walk around with their head down

because they're denying themselves worldly pleasures. No, you're not, you're drawing attention to yourself and that's pride. That's not what he's saying. He's saying that it causes trouble when we have to even graciously and with a kind tone and spirit say, "I can't go along with those things. I can't join your club, or I have to resign your club. Can't be in this any longer."

And by the way, some of these things can be different one to another depending on where has us, God has us in our sanctification. We don't go around judging each other harshly on this unless there's clear biblical issues at hand, but so a lot of this, so many of these, it's a judgment call and you need discernment. It takes a while to work through it but trust me, there's gonna be some cross-bearing and sometimes an individual Christian bears the cross, sometimes individual families together. "Oh, y'all go to that church." I don't know how many times I've had people tell me, "Pastor, it's been difficult to stay at Grace Life with the ridicule and rejection." Well, that's part of bearing your cross. If you're following me, that's not bearing your cross, but if you believe the truth is taught here, imperfectly yet but genuineness and we're trying to follow the truth and people ridicule you for that, that's a cross for you to carry. I heard a man say one time, "Well, you know, I, I'm sort of cold by nature. It's my personality and I have an, an angry temperament, that's just who I am and that's just my cross to bear." No, it's not, that's your wife's cross to bear. That's your stinking sin is what that is.

And by the way, can I just get into a little Christian truth this morning and compare it with psychology? I don't care how you are naturally. I don't care what your predispositions are. I don't care what your natural personality is. If it's wrong, if it's hurtful, stop it. Change. Be different. Command yourself to have a different personality. I'm still working on that, you ought to too. Amen, church? I'm this and I'm that, well, I'm just this. Well, who died and left you king of the universe? Quit being that. You don't need to be that because it hurts people. Stop it. That's good psychology and biblical counseling. Quit. Stop it. Or find somebody to help you stop it.

"Deny yourself, take up this cross and follow Me." Follow me, that's what he says in verse 34. It means to follow and continue following. Deny yourself, take up your cross. You see what convicts do under force, the Christian does under devotion. We gladly take up our cross. I, I read these testimonies of the martyrs and, um, our Baptist forefathers were martyred viciously by the Protestant and Catholic Churches of Europe, 3-4-500 years ago. And I read these testimonies of these men and women singing praises to God as the flames consumed their lives. They counted the cost. "Follow Me."

When you took, took up a cross in ancient Rome and they, they in the context of Jerusalem when somebody was crucified in that region they went down the Via Dolorosa and they went out to outside the gate and they went to the hill called Golgotha, Calvary, and as they carried that cross, the reason the Romans made them carry that cross, this was their public humiliation and shame that shouted to the world, "Rome is right and Rome's laws are right and I am wrong and I'm guilty." When we carry our cross, here's what we say, naturally speaking, "We are wrong and the world is wrong but our Lord is right." That's what we're saying.

Well, the absoluteness of it. There is no way around it. He called the disciples and all the crowd and said, "You guys," in effect, he's saying, "You guys gotta lot of fanciful ideas about what your Messiah is gonna be and do and how it's gonna benefit you. Let me clear this thing up real quick. It's all about denying yourself, taking up a cross and following Me." Now there's great advantages of it. He throws that in to encourage us because we can't see all things the way God puts it together. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life," this is verse 35, "for My sake and the gospel's will save it." If a person goes out to say, "I'm not gonna miss out on this world, man. I'm not gonna miss out on the funs and the thrills and the pleasures. I'm gonna grab for all the gusto and I'll tell you what, I'll put Jesus in my hip pocket so I might get to heaven one day. I don't want to leave Him out." Blasphemy. Blasphemy. That means you're trying to save your life. He said, "If you do that, you're gonna lose it." But the idea of losing it is, is to have zero, have zero now and, and in reality because all of these pleasures and all these rewards of this world are hollow, they're not substantial, and then you lose out on your eternal pleasures.

Then he said, "But if you'll lose your life to this cause," the idea is you'll, if you'll die to worldly pleasures and desires when they conflict with obeying Christ, if that's your purpose, then you'll be reward tenfold and it will last for all eternity. Let's see, Matthew 19:29, I think we have that on the screen. Jesus said it very plainly this way, "And everyone who has left houses," following Jesus might mean you lose your house, "or brothers or sisters," might mean you lose members of your very family, "or father or mother or children or farms," might mean you lose your wealth or a great portion of your wealth, "will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life." Powerful stuff. So he says, "There's a great advantage. Men can't see it, it takes the eye of faith to see it but there's a great advantage in this."

He says "for My sake and the gospel's sake." You see, our motivation, again, is not out of desperation. We're not desperately running around worried and anxiety-ridden over eternal punishment, we've gotta, we've gotta miss hell so we gotta jump through these hoops. If that's your view of Christianity, you've missed the whole thing. Our motivation is not that, our motivation is not desperation, our motivation is devotion. We're not doing this to gain heaven, that's already been done. That was settled at the cross. Heaven is gain for those who believe on Jesus. But doing it because we want to please our Savior because there's something in us that's been kindled whereby we are learning to treasure him above all others and that increasing treasure of him makes the things of this world grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. Satan's philosophy is glory now without suffering but it ends up with eternal suffering and loss. God's philosophy some suffering now but transformed into glory both now and for all eternity.

Look at verses 36 and 37, we're about done, "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" Okay, you gained everything, you've got the biggest check account, checking account, biggest savings account in all of Alabama and you're gonna die. You gain nothing. But what you did for Christ you'll take on to eternity. Can I just say this? I've, I've been watching people for over 40 years in the same church, do you

know what I've learned? Listen to me, people who grow old resting in God's will for them, people who grow old resting in God's will die better, sweeter, peaceful, contentment. There's an advantage, Jesus said.

Then verse 38, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation." Let's stop right there. In other words, if you have the chance, choice to trust in Christ and make him the center of your life and not worldly pleasures and worldly priorities, if you have that choice Christ or the world and you decide, "I, I'm ashamed to embrace Christ and publicly profess Him as the end of my life and the purpose, I'm just gonna keep living for the world," he said, "If that's what you do the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." It reminds afresh that when Jesus taught people when he was on the earth, he was a man's man. That's heavy stuff. That's piercing startling stuff. And not just was he a man's man, he spoke the truth.

So where there's true Christianity there's always two crosses. There has to be the Savior's cross, that's in our logo, that's the primary cross, that's the main cross, the other cross hangs on it. And then there's our cross behind his. His cross saves us. Through our cross we serve him. None of us have arrived but all of us can recommit and resurrender and reaffirm this is who we are and this is what we are.