



TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

1. One of Jesus' favorite sayings was "Take up your cross and follow Me" (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21 TR, KJV, NKJV; Luke 9:23; 14:27).

A Roman cross had four parts: the stipes, patibulum, sedile, and foot frame. The stipes was the vertical stake which was fixed permanently in the ground. The patibulum was the horizontal beam carried from the tribunal to the place of execution. A wooden seat (sedile) was often attached to the stipes to support the body's weight. Jesus literally took up and carried the patibulum (John 19:17), and, when He faltered, Simon of Cyrene was ordered to carry it behind Him (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). To take up your cross means to follow Jesus even to death, to pick up the patibulum and follow behind Jesus to Golgotha.

2. To take up your cross refers to persecution and death.

The only reason to pick up a cross is to carry it to the place of crucifixion. In other words you're being forced to carry it even though you've done nothing wrong. That's persecution. Few carried the patibulum willingly. Jesus tells us to pick it up willingly—as He did. Are you willing to suffer and die for Him in the same way He suffered and died for you? If you're not, you're not worthy of Him. And you have no right to call yourself His disciple.

3. Jesus uttered this saying on several occasions *before* His crucifixion.

- a. From the beginning Jesus knew how his public ministry would end (John 3:14–16).
- b. Jesus predicted his crucifixion many times during his earthly ministry (Matt. 16:21, 24; 17:9; 20:18–19; 26:2, 28; John 8:28; 12:32–33).

4. To take up your cross daily is a decision you have to make every day (Luke 9:23).

It's not a decision made once and forever but is repeated over and over. The logic here is *a fortiori* (*qal wahomer* in Hebrew): if you're willing to give up the most (your life) you should certainly be willing to give up anything less.

5. Taking up your cross is preceded by self-denial (Matt. 16:24).

To pick up your cross willingly involves a prior decision to deny yourself more days on earth. Peter made this decision beforehand but backed away under pressure: "But Peter insisted emphatically, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the others said the same" (Mark 14:31; cf. Luke 22:33; John 13:37). Peter counted the cost but refused to pay when the note came due.

6. Being willing to take up your cross is a prerequisite for discipleship (Luke 14:27).

Peter, in the courtyard of the high priest, feared the possibility of crucifixion for himself and denied knowing Jesus three times. He denied being a disciple of Jesus (John 18:17, 25)! At this time in his life Peter was not willing to follow behind Jesus to Golgotha.

7. To refuse to take up your cross is to be unworthy of Christ (Matt. 10:38).

After denying Jesus Peter certainly felt unworthy: "And he went outside and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:75=Luke 22:62; cf. Mark 14:72).