

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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Vol. 2 No. 6 March 14, 2008

Rom. 8:29 – *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.*



BECOME A RADICAL DISCIPLE

Men who have walked with God have proven that He cannot fully bless a man until the man has first been conquered by Him. The degree of blessing he receives will relate to the degree to which the man allows God to have victory over him. **It is not the strong that know God's blessing. It is the conquered; those who have allowed God to strip away their own strength, enduring the pain, difficulty and humility, and who then stand naked and weak before Him, defeated and conquered, yet in victory.**

How important it is for us to understand that we did not create ourselves; we, therefore, have no right to self-sufficiency. We were created by God; and our purpose has always been to become wholly dependent upon Him.

Rom. 8:28-29 – *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.*

Again, our purpose is to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus, and Jesus was wholly dependent on the Father. We cannot please God in our own strength. The self is at enmity with God. Only when we are empty, when there is nothing left of us, are we in a position to receive from God and to please Him.

Jesus told His Church: "Deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me." But we live in a Christian society that only hears the third part. The powerless Christian is willing to follow Jesus but only on his own terms. "Deny yourself" and "take up your cross" are Scriptures that are not part of a weak-kneed, powerless Church. "But this is a different generation we are trying to reach," the powerless Church replies. "We cannot do things the old way. We must adjust."

Oh, dear Christian, do you not know that "adjust" is just a more acceptable definition of "compromise"? "Oh but I wouldn't compromise," you say. "I would only adjust so that I can reach others." Excuse me while I explain to Jesus that His way won't work any longer. He was, obviously, mistaken when He

said, "I will change not." Paul must have misheard the Holy Spirit when he wrote, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Is the Church so blind that it really believes that because it is attempting to minister to an unholy generation that it, too, must become unholy? This is not the Holy Spirit that is speaking that way, dear friends; it is the spirit of a powerless, weak-kneed Church.

Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today and forever. **Radical discipleship is still the only way to holiness and holiness is still the only way to receive the power of God.** Only those who have yielded and have been conquered by God will receive the fullness of His blessing.

There is a narrow road to holiness. It is the road that all true disciples must travel. It is a lonely road. Your unspiritual friends are not there.

Who are you following? And in whose strength? If you are unwilling to deny yourself, if you are unwilling

to take up your cross daily, then you are following a ghost. And, dear friends, it is not the Holy Ghost. Do you really think the Lord said all these things in His word and didn't mean them?

There is a narrow road to holiness. It is the road that all true disciples must travel. It is a lonely road. Your unspiritual friends are not there. The instructions are clear. You must lose your life. You must deny yourself – daily. You must take up your cross – daily. And you must follow Jesus – on those terms.

1 Pet. 1:15- *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.*

God demands that you be holy because He is holy. It is a command from the Lord, not an option. When you are told to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus, just where is it that Jesus is leading you? He is leading you to the fullness of the Father. To eternal life.

John 12:47-50-*As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal*

life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

Dare you stand before this holy God and tell Him that you will not yield completely to Him?

That Scripture is pretty straightforward. Jesus told us what to do. He told us that His orders came straight from the Father and he told us that the Father's commands lead to eternal life. But that's not all He said. He made it very clear what the results would be if we choose not to obey His commands. **We will be judged by the very words he spoke to us.** Dare you stand before this holy God and tell Him that you will not yield completely to Him?

If you love Jesus, you will obey His teaching. God the Father and Jesus, the Son, will come and make their abode in you. "Oh," you say, "but I do love Jesus." Do you? Do you obey His teaching? "Uh, yes, I think so." Have you lost your life in Him? That's what the Scripture says, you know. Do you deny yourself daily, take up your cross daily and follow Him? You cannot choose to obey only those things that appeal to you and disregard those things that are hard on the flesh. They are hard on the flesh purposely.

WELCOME TO RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

The radical disciple throws himself on the mercy of the Lord and allows God to rule over him. He denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows Jesus.

The weak-kneed, powerless Christian follows Jesus, too, but he does so in his own strength, making his own decisions regarding which of Jesus' teachings he can succumb to without interfering with his worldly-compromised lifestyle. His self determines where he goes and what he does. He is deceived. In order to follow Jesus, according to the Scriptures, you must walk behind Him. You can't ever lose sight of your leader. You trust Him completely. Wherever He takes you, you go, trusting in His leadership. Whatever He demands, you comply, knowing that He understands things that you do not. You realize that He is taking you down a narrow road, the road to holiness – a road that He has traveled. **He knows the way. He is familiar with it. You can trust Him.**

How can the weak-kneed, powerless Christian follow Jesus? He cannot even find Him. How can he go where Jesus goes if he cannot find Him? Stop hiding behind a man-made cross that allows you to continue in your sin and continue playing with the

things of the world. **Run, dear Christian, with all that you have – run directly at the true cross of Jesus Christ.** You desperately need a collision. Only then can you find the One that you are to follow. Only then will your self-created pseudo-Christian half-truths disintegrate. Only then will you find yourself weeping at the feet of your Savior. Only then, for the first time, will you know that something powerful has happened to you. Welcome to radical discipleship.

It is a sad commentary on much of the Church (but not all of it), but the radical disciple may be the only one in his Church following Jesus down the narrow road to holiness. Where are all the others? Don't let that deter you, friend. Don't turn back, dear radical disciple. Don't look to the powerless Church for advice or help. Just continue to follow Jesus. You can trust Him.

Phil. 3:13-14-*I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

But you trek on, knowing that God, in His grace, will take you as far as He is willing and as you are willing to let Him.

Even Paul, the epitome of the radical disciple, agreed that the walk on the narrow road to holiness is a never-ending trek. But it is never a frustrating or tiring walk. You may never reach the goal for which you set out. After all, who among us is exactly like Jesus? But you trek on, knowing that God, in His grace, will take you as far as He is willing and as you are willing to let Him. Like Paul, your purpose is to get as close to pure holiness as you can, but until you can take hold of it, there is one thing you do: You forget the past – it is already gone; there is nothing you can do about it. You press on toward the goal to win the prize. What is the prize? It is waiting in Heaven for you. You trek on, longing to be like Jesus, but trusting God completely that He will do with you whatever He wishes, and knowing that your final step into Heaven is solid and is worthwhile and is far greater than any expectations you now have.

Even if you are the only radical disciple on that road, it matters little. It is still worthwhile to the utmost degree.

Certainly, it should be said that there are many in the Church and many, among her leaders, who are radical disciples themselves. But they, too, know that they are in the minority. Don't let the numbers discourage you. Trek on!

Why are there so few radical disciples? Because the generation in which we live is selfish. It has an insatiable desire for things to heap upon themselves. This generation, including much of the Church, is self-absorbed, wanting more for themselves, and yet is nearly totally immune to the dangers that lurk in these fleshly desires. It is a fleshly generation, a me-generation, and the Church has taken a few steps down to its level in the hope to draw some of this generation to its doorstep. As a result, the Church is full of untruthful Ananiases and Sapphiras but there is no Peter to say: "You cannot bring your worldliness into the Church. We will not allow it."

Can the Church be saved from this self-imposed treachery? Yes. It starts with one radical disciple. One man or woman who takes Jesus at His word. One man or woman who is willing to lose his life – completely. One man or woman who has a deep desire to see holiness and is willing to pay the price to get it.

Will you, dear Christian, follow Jesus on His terms? First, you must allow Him to find you? Where will He find you? **He will find you lying at His feet. When you, dear friend, are sick of yourself, sick of sin, sick of seeing a powerless Church go through the motions but accomplishing little, you**

will fall at the feet of Jesus and you will allow Him to rule over you. You will finally realize that, as the acorn is to the oak tree, the kernel of corn is to the field of maize, and the flower pod is to a gorgeous array of multi-colored flowers, only in death can life be wrought.

Having wept all of the callousness and apathy out of your heart, you will rise up, look in the Master's eyes, deny yourself, take up your cross and call out in a loud voice: "Here I am, Jesus. You lead and I will follow. Let the axe fall where it will. I am prepared for anything. It matters little how difficult or bloody is the trail. I trust You. Whatever has not died in me, I yield to You. Whatever needs to be changed in me, I yield to You. Whatever needs to be crucified in me, I yield to You. Whatever needs to be healed in me, I yield to You. I know, Lord, that there is much self in me. I know how destructive it is. I yield it to You. I may fight You, Lord. I know my capabilities and my weaknesses. I know how selfish I am. So I beseech You that if I do fight You, do not, under any circumstances, allow me to win. You win, Lord. You win. I am prepared to be stripped naked. I am prepared to be operated on. Though I know I was saved years ago, You have, in Your mercy, allowed me another collision with the cross. This time, Lord, it got my

attention. I deny myself. I take up my cross. I follow You. Lead on, gracious Lord. Lead on."

Understanding that radical discipleship is not for weenies or weak-kneed Christians; understanding that the radical disciple must, once again, collide with the cross and yield all of his own strength to the Lord to be crucified, many will back away, unwilling to loosen the greedy grasp they have on the world and its gleaming, golden hemorrhoids.

But not you, dear radical disciple. You echo the apostle Peter: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the holy one of God.*

You must know that, too, with every fiber of your being. Does God really have the words of eternal life? If so, do you obey them? All of them? If not, it is time to do so. Tomorrow may be too late.

Lead on, gracious Lord. Lead on!

Please join us at the radical discipleship meetings every other Monday at New Life Foursquare Church, 5913 Jefferson Pike, Frederick. We meet next on Monday, March 24th at 7:00 PM.

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Peter Hess is the author of multiple non-fiction Christian books and Christian fiction novels that are sold nationwide. More information is available on the website.

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