

THE SHORTENED CROSS

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God bless you,

Oluwatobi S. Adewuyi
Coordinator

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God bless you!

Topic:
THE SHORTENED CROSS
Text: Luke 9:23

Prayer

Dear Father of all understanding, we exalt you, we glorify your holy name. Lord Jesus, as we go into your word, minister unto us in Jesus Christ name. Increase us and help us to understand today's teaching in Jesus Christ name, amen.

Bible Text: Luke 9:23

[23]And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Study

Before any man can follow Christ, such a man is expected to fulfill what is written in **Luke 9:23** which says; "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

1. Deny himself
2. Take up his cross daily
3. Then, that's when such a person can follow Christ.

There are reasons that Jesus said the person must deny himself first and take up his cross "daily". It's not just a one-time thing. It's something that should be done daily. So, anybody who is not ready to deny himself and take up his cross daily is not ready to follow Christ. It's so funny that these days, a lot of people want to follow Christ, but they don't want to deny themselves and they also feel like the cross is too heavy for them to bear or carry daily. This is why you see that some people will "log out" of Christian living for a while and "login" back.

Those are the words we can use to describe their Christian lifestyle — login and log out, because of how they just decide to live like a non-christian for a while and come back to God after another while. But, what did Jesus mean by carrying the cross daily? And, what does a shortened cross mean? Kindly pay attention as we proceed. Following Christ can be so tasking and it requires a lot of dedication and commitment. The truth is, a lazy man cannot follow Christ and he who hates pain or cannot endure pain cannot also follow Christ. The cross signifies every single thing that following Christ comes with — the struggles, the pains, the joy, the self denial, being willing, standing strong during trials and temptations and a whole lot more. Whenever someone was taken to the cross, it was either to be nailed to the cross or to be tortured. At that moment, it's not really a moment of enjoyment at all.

If you know what crucifixion looks like, you will know it's not enjoyment at all. Christ did not promise us only riches or enjoyment, pains and sufferings too are involved. If the reason you became a Christian is to be rich and to enjoy and "chop life" (as some would say), then I'm sorry to tell you that you have picked the wrong "religion". Because just as Jesus became poor that you may be rich, He also told us that we will suffer for His sake.

Romans 8:17:

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we SUFFER WITH HIM, that we may be also glorified together."

Philippians 1:29:

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE;"

2 Timothy 2:12:

"If we SUFFER, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:"

1 Peter 4:13:

"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are PARTAKERS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

1 Peter 2:21:

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also SUFFERED FOR US, leaving us an example, THAT YE SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS:"

You will see that different accounts make us understand that suffering is part of the package that comes with being a child of God; a Christian. So, if your mindset has always been living a life without suffering for Christ, then you have to change that mindset now because that's part of what the cross entails. The pains and inconveniences are what the cross signifies. Jesus carried his own cross — all the pains He passed through even to being crucified. At a point, He nearly told God to let the cup pass over Him but He later told God to let His will come to pass. That's to show you what carrying one's cross could be like.

Do you know that despite the fact that we are told to carry out cross daily, some are carrying their cross daily but the cross they are carrying is a "shortened cross"? They have cut their cross and the cross is not the same as the one given to them by God. You might be wondering how a cross that cannot even be seen with the physical eyes was cut or shortened. We will look into the areas now and you will agree with me that a lot of Christians have shortened their cross.

How Christians shorten their Cross

1. By not wanting to suffer for Christ or be persecuted for His sake: When you as a Christian begin to avoid persecutions. You fear preaching to others because of embarrassment. You don't want people to talk you down or look down on you. You are always avoiding associating yourself with Christ in the public or in places where you know they don't highly rate Christians. You are indirectly denying Christ.

2. By partaking in the worldly pleasures: We are not supposed to partake in worldly pleasures as it shouldn't be a part of us as Christians. If as a Christian, you want to stand for Christ and you also want to partake in worldly pleasures. It shows your love for the world. **1 Timothy 5:6:** "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." If you can't endure restraining yourself from worldly pleasures while carrying your cross, it means you are shortening your cross because you do not want all that the cross gives and you are not patient enough.

3. By neglecting God's assignment in your hands: When God sends you on an assignment and you feel it's too much or inconvenient for you, then you neglect it, it shows you are trying to shorten your cross. Sometimes, God can tell you to go to a village or rural area to preach the gospel. But, because of the inconvenience that comes with it, you are hesitating. Sometimes, he can tell you to go to a city to preach where the lives of Christians are threatened. If you refuse to go because you are thinking you may lose your life, it shows that you are trying to shorten the cross to what is fit for you, forgetting that he that loses his life for Christ's sake shall gain it. **Luke 9:24:** "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

4. When you source for help from ungodly sources: I have heard of pastors who were not patient enough in ministry and later went to source for financial help from other sources that are not of God. The cross of their ministry was too heavy for them, so they had to cut it short in order for them to be able to carry it. But, they forgot that Christ will not reward you for a shortened cross. He only rewards you for carrying the cross that is meant for you successfully. He didn't promise that it would be easy, but He promised that He is always with us during these periods.

Isaiah 43:2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Matthew 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

5. When you run from spiritual exercises that may look vigorous but which is needed for your growth: If you know that fasting till 6pm three times a week is what your consecration is and what your spiritual growth requires to soar, but you decide to fast only once a month because you feel like it's stressful to fast three times a week. It shows that you're trying to shorten your cross, thereby reducing your consecration because you want comfort. You have forgotten that comfort is not applicable in the area of growth. You can't grow in your comfort zone!

6. By not fully obeying God's commandments but choosing to obey the ones that suits and makes you comfortable: In most cases, the commandments of God and His instructions are very hard to do and this is why we have the Spirit of God to help us find it easy to do. But, naturally, you might not find it easy to do.

And, if you are not ready to comply 100% with God's instructions whether it's easy or not, you will end up not following all His commandments. So, if you are the type that out of 3 instructions that you are given, you answer two but you leave the last one because it's hard to obey, then it means you are trying to shorten the cross which you are supposed to carry. In this Christian race, you don't run from any instructions that come from God! You fully obey whether it's hard or easy. **John 14:15:** "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Jesus did say you should keep some of His commandments. You are meant to keep all His commandments. So, if you don't want to shorten your cross, ensure you obey all His commandments and do not start choosing the ones to obey based on how easy or hard they are. Having looked at some of the ways Christians shorten their Cross, let's look at the dangers in carrying a shortened cross as a Christian.

Dangers in carrying a shortened cross

1. You are not fulfilling the will of God which indirectly means you are on your own.
2. You may think you are working for God, but there is no reward for you because you are trying to suit your fleshly desires.
3. Disobedience to God and His instructions.
4. Lack of spiritual growth.
5. Lack of fulfillment of purpose.
6. Eternal death.
7. Lack of direction and alignment.
8. Lack of spiritual protection from God.
9. The heavens will be disappointed in you.
10. The work will be taken from you and handed to someone who is ready.

If you notice that you are trying to shorten your cross in any way, ensure you amend your ways now to avoid facing the dangers in carrying a shortened cross. May the Lord help us make amends where necessary in Jesus Christ name, Amen.

We have come to the end of today's teaching. Have a great day ahead, brethren.

Invitation

If you know that you are still living in sin and you are ready to repent and begin to live your life in strict obedience to God so that you can overcome every sin in your life to make heaven, please place your right hand on your chest and say this prayer with your mouth.

Say,

"Lord Jesus, I accept You as my personal Lord and Savior. I believe that You died for me and took away my sins so that I will not face the penalty of them. I surrender my life to You today, and I make a decision to obey and follow You. Come into my life now and accept me as Your child. Thank You for saving me, in Jesus Christ's name I pray, Amen."

Congratulations, now you are saved. If you prayed this short prayer, please WhatsApp **+2347067511039** and let me know that you have just been saved. I want to have a word with you. God bless you!

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