

I. Introduction – All who follow Jesus should expect to suffer. v. 23a Mark 8:34 2 Tim. 3:12

II. Jesus' disciples should expect to follow in His steps. v. 23

A. You must deny yourself. v. 23a

1. Jesus is not merely referring to a bit of self-discipline.
2. Jesus is saying that you must disown and disavow your very self. 22:34,61
3. You repent of "self" as you commit in faith to Jesus. 18:9-14 Phil. 3:4-11
4. Jesus denied Himself for you, in obedience to the Father. Phil. 2:5-8 2 Co. 8:9
5. Jesus likewise demands your total devotion. 14:26
6. How does this work practically? Pr. 3:5-6 1 Cor. 9:1ff 10:23f Phil. 2:3-4 1 Pe. 4:8

B. You must take up your cross. v. 23b 14:27 Mt. 27:32

1. What would this have meant to the original hearers? v. 22
2. Cross bearing is not merely putting up with life's ordinary trials.
3. Taking up your cross involves suffering for Jesus' sake. 6:22-23 Col. 1:24
4. Jesus willingly bore His cross for you. 9:22,51 John 10:14-18 Rom. 5:6-8
5. Following Christ involves the death of self. Gal. 2:20 5:24 Rom. 6:1-11,17-18  
Acts 20:22-24 21:13 2 Co. 11:22ff
6. Cross bearing is not merely a one time event, but takes place daily. 1 Co. 15:31

C. You must continue to follow Him. 5:11,27-29 18:22,28

1. We should expect to walk the same path of suffering, rejection and death which He walked. 9:22 9:57-61 1 Pe. 2:21
2. How can you know how He is leading you? 2 Tim. 3:16-17 Pr. 16:9
3. He leads us into a community of love and to reach out in order to make more disciples. John 13:35 Matthew 28:19-20

D. Must you follow Jesus in this way in order to be saved?

1. We are saved by grace through faith, apart from works. Eph. 2:8-10 Rom. 3:21ff
2. Those who are saved will follow Jesus. Eph. 2:10 John 14:15 15:14 Phil. 1:6
3. Some who express interest in Jesus are not truly saved. 8:4-15 6:46-49 Mt. 7:13ff

III. Ultimately, following Jesus is worth it. v. 24-27

A. Consider the apparent paradox of discipleship. v. 24 17:32-33 John 12:25

1. Those who try to cling to their worldly life will lose everything. 17:32-33 12:13-21  
16:19-31 18:18-30
2. Those who relinquish their lives to the Lord will be saved. John 12:25 Gal. 6:14
3. Jesus lost His life so that He might save us. John 12:23-26 2 Co. 8:9 1 Pet. 3:18 2:24
4. Following Christ is costly in the short term, but rewarding in the long term.
5. Pursuing worldly things may appear profitable in the short run, but is costly in the long run – spiritual suicide.

B. Those who choose the world over Jesus will experience total loss. v. 25 Mt. 16:25

1. True self-interest will lead you to follow Christ.
2. Your present choice will determine your soul's everlasting destiny.
3. There is nothing this world offers for which it is worth losing your soul.

4. Why do people pursue worldly things instead of following Jesus? 8:14 1 Jo. 2:15-16
  5. Worldly things don't even bring true satisfaction in this life. Is. 55:1-2 Jo. 4:13
  6. Whatever worldly things you gain will soon be lost. Ecclesiastes 1-2 1 Jo. 2:17
  7. Jesus actually was offered the whole world, but chose the path of suffering so that He might gain our souls. 4:5-8 Heb. 12:1-2 Isa. 53:10-12
  8. We give up some things in this world only to gain much more in the world to come. 18:29-30 Mt. 6:19-21 Heb. 11:13-16 2 Pe. 3:11-13 1:4
- C. Those who reject Jesus' call to discipleship will be rejected by Him in the day of judgment. v. 26 12:8
1. Why would someone be ashamed of Jesus and His words? John 12:43 Pr. 29:25 1 Co. 1:18ff
  2. We should instead boast in Him and His Word. 1 Co. 1:30f Rom. 1:16f 2 Tim. 1:12 Gal. 6:14
  3. Astonishingly, He is unashamed of us. Heb. 2:10-11 11:16 12:1-2
  4. One day the Messiah (the Son of Man) will return to establish His long anticipated glorious kingdom. Dan. 7:9-14 Mt. 25:31 Rev. 20:11-15 2 Th. 1:7
  5. Those who treated Jesus as unimportant and lived for themselves will be punished. Mt. 16:27 John 5:22,27,40 Acts 10:42 17:31 Mark 8:38
  6. Those who were faithful to Him will share in His triumph. Acts 7:54-60
  7. We live in expectation of that day. Col. 3:1ff 2 Pe. 3:11-12 1 Jo. 3:1-2
- D. How could Jesus say that some who were present would not taste death until they see the kingdom of God?
1. He can't mean that there were people in the crowd who would still be alive at His second coming.
  2. He could refer to coming display of His regal glory at:
    - a. The transfiguration. 9:28ff 2 Pe. 1:16-18
    - b. His resurrection. Rom. 1:4 1 Co. 6:14
    - c. His ascension. Acts 1:9-11
    - d. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the amazing spread of the gospel which follows. Acts 2 Eph. 1:14 2 Co. 1:22 5:5
    - e. The judgment of Israel in 70 AD. Mark 13:1-30
  3. The point is that though the path of discipleship is hard, in the end it will have been worth it.

#### IV. Concluding applications – discipleship is radical and costly!

##### Discussion questions

1. How does this passage relate to the preceding verses?
2. What does Jesus mean by "denying yourself"?
3. What does Jesus mean by "taking up your cross"?
4. What examples can you think of from your own life when you have denied yourself and taken up your cross?
5. In what areas of your life do you need to deny yourself so that you can better follow Christ?
6. What does it mean to lose your life?
7. In what sense have you lost your life?
8. What do you gain by losing your life for Jesus' sake?
9. How are you tempted to be ashamed of Jesus?
10. What will happen to those who cling to this world and don't follow Jesus?
11. How does our anticipation of Jesus' return affect how we live now?