

“Jesus the Rock: The Answer to an Identity Crisis”

Matthew 16:13-24

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Matthew 16:13-24

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Introduction

My generation didn’t talk about identity that much. My generation talked about doing things, what should I do and what should I live for? Your generation talks a lot about identity. Our identity almost becomes an excuse to everything that we do. Identity is really important for this generation. Therefore, a lot of people think they know their identity but they might not. I believe there is a crisis of identity in our generation. Who are you? Identities are important. If you think about the some of the identities that’s in this generation, political identity—Republican or Democrat, ethnic identity—White or non-white, sexual identity—accepting of or part of LGBT community or against that, gender identity—male or female or nonbinary. The Bible seems to say no matter what you think you are, you don’t know who you are until you know God and Jesus Christ. If you think about identity, it’s very spiritual. We are asking ourselves: Who are we and why are we here? What are we doing in this life? The solution to our identity crisis as we look into this passage is knowing who Jesus Christ is and how we are related to Him. There is some rock solid truth that we need to stand on from this passage, especially in this day and age and for our generation. Jesus Christ is the heart of Christianity and Christianity is Jesus Christ.

We see a couple things about Jesus. Theologically, we need to know who Jesus is and what did He do, or the person of Jesus Christ and the work of Jesus Christ. That is the main essence of this chapter. However, we get confused by side questions take precedence: Who is the rock in verse 18? What are the keys in verse 19? What is gates of hell in verse 18? We’ll try to answer all

these questions very quickly because those are side questions. We want to focus on identity through this passage.

I. The Identity of Christ [13-17]

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴ And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵ He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Why does Jesus ask this question? We might ask other people who they think we are because we want to know what other people think of us to help us so we can understand ourselves. I don't think Jesus is asking for this reason. It's not that Jesus doesn't know himself but that the disciples needed to know who he is so that they know they are. In a couple years, Jesus is going to leave so they need to know what to live for and what to die for. Jesus is revealing himself through the words of his disciples and by the work of the Holy Spirit.

This part of the passage reminds me of a situation when I was on a youth group retreat. Our youth group was small with maybe 10 people. I was in the bathroom and it was the kind of bathroom where you can hear the girls' bathroom and what they are saying. The girls were talking about somebody. They didn't know I could hear it. I was standing there quietly, listening. They were talking about this cute guy. I was so proud because they were probably talking about me. Who else is cuter than me in the youth group? I was thinking like that, so arrogant, so proud. Then, suddenly, one of the girls says, "Yeah, he plays guitar and sings well." At that moment, I knew it wasn't me they were talking about because I couldn't play guitar at that time. After a couple of minutes, they were talking about me because my name came up and there was no other person by that name in our youth group. But they were saying I play guitar. I realized that at least one of the girls liked me for who she thinks I was or wanted me to be rather than who I really was. She imagined me being this certain kind of person and all the factors associated with that. Often, we are like this about Jesus. We think He is a certain way but when certain things happen in our lives, our interpretation of who He is wrong. We think we know the God who is in our imagination rather than God of revelation through the Scripture. We need to know who he is through the Word so that we can have a proper relationship with Him. Here, through the words of Peter as the Holy Spirit is working in his heart, Jesus is revealing who He is. Sometimes we don't think that God is someone who loves us in the midst of hardships, sufferings, and difficulties, but He is. Yet we imagine Him to act certain ways but not understand who He is. Don't love Him for who you think He is but love Him for who is revealed in the Scripture.

A. The Christ [16]

Peter's great confession is two simple factors: the Christ and the Son of the living God. Often, they had one name during that time, so Jesus was his name and Christ was the title. The Christ has the same meaning as, Messiah the anointed one. In the Old Testament, the people who were specially used by God were anointed. Most of the people were prophets, priests, and kings. Jesus is saying He's the prophesized Messiah. He is the prophet who speaks God's Word to us, He's the

priest who cleanses our sin, He's the king who rules over us and protects us. He's the Christ that Israelites have been waiting for. He's identified as the Messiah who was to reign forever on the throne. The identity of Jesus is as the Messiah and the one who was to reign forever on the throne of His great ancestor David. He's the chosen king among men, but he must be a man, the best among them. So, there was still an emphasis on His humanity.

B. The Son of the living God [16]

The next part of the phrase, the Son of the living God, is the other aspect of who Jesus is. Does this mean He is lesser than God? No, it means different than God the Father because He's the Son. He has the same attributes, characteristics, and DNA as the Father so that means He is God Himself. He is the second person of the Trinity.

It shows the two aspects of Jesus Christ in humanity and divinity. The combination of this idea is very important. Jesus Christ was a man, but not near a man because he was sinless and came to die for us. But he's also God himself that came to save his people. If he was just a man, he could only die for another man. If Jesus was not God, His death as He died for us would have no more value than any person's death. He was sinless man. As a man He could die for us but because he is also God-man, whose value is infinite, that is why he can die for all of us and take away all our sin.

In the Greek text, this confession only has 10 words but the definite article offers 4 times. In English, it says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the God, the Living One". He is emphasizing how He is the One and only true King. God-man was the Savior of the world. This was such an important and truthful confession that Jesus pointed out that it was not in the same category as the other things Peter had a habit of blurting out.

C. Implications for us [17]

God the Father has revealed this to Peter. It probably wasn't a direct voice but in his thinking process somehow God has communicated to him through the means of the Holy Spirit so that he can understand on his own that this was Christ, the Son of the Living God.

1. God has to reveal who He is to us

It is God who has to reveal that to us, just as He has revealed that to Peter through the explanation of Jesus in the Old Testament. We can get that as we read the Scripture. It cannot just be revealed to us intellectually, but it becomes our testimony and confession, that God has to reveal who He is to us through the means of divine revelation and His written word in the Old and New Testament.

2. This has to become our confession

It is not just something we say, but something that we say with utter meaning in our hearts and worship to Him. As we say it throughout our lives and everything we do in our lives is for Jesus. Though we might say it, how we live ought to be this confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God.

3. Then we know who we are in light of this confession

He cleanses our sin. He is the King and we are His people. We are in Jesus Christ. He is building and expanding His Kingdom through the church of Jesus Christ. Know your testimony.

4. Evaluate everything that we do from this truth

Ask, “Where am I? What am I doing and living for? Why am I breathing?” We need to examine our hearts, our desires, and our motives and ask if it is for my allegiance to my King and for His elevation. What do I get excited about? Why do I get angry? What do I think about? What are my behaviors and habits? What do I spend my time doing? Is it for exaltation or mine? How do I need to change in such a way that will show Jesus Christ? Do I act and live like a Christ-like person? Are we influencing the culture or being influenced by the culture?

Oscar Wilde said, “Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.”

Another person said a similar thing, “Nothing of me is original. I am a combined effort of everyone I’ve ever known.”

As human beings, we are so influenced by other people. But the combination of those people expressed as your own is what makes you unique. Still, we get everything from Jesus. We are to image him because we are not original beings and need to be most powerfully influenced by Jesus. Without Christ, we get certain qualities from others and it becomes who we are. But when you are in Jesus Christ, He reveals to us through His Word and who we are in Him.

C.S. Lewis says, “Look for Christ and you will find him, and with him everything else.” That’s a Christian: who we are in light of who He is in our lives.

So, we need to know who we are in Jesus through the revelation of the Word of God. Read and understand God’s Word, prayer, worship, and know Him in intimacy.

There needs to be a balance between being doctrine-oriented and experience-oriented, knowing the Bible and knowing Him in our worship. Through the system of understanding the Bible, it becomes a doctrine and theology of who He is, so you can always explode in worship.

Hyeon Soo Lim is a Canadian-Korean pastor who was detained in North Korea for two and a half years. He realized how much he didn’t read the Bible, but he had nothing to do, so he read the Bible. He said that he ate in isolation 2,757 times. He read the Bible in English and Korean 5 times. He worshipped alone on Sundays 130 times. He memorized 700 Bible verses.

Then, he studied the culture of North Korea and the regime. He came out stronger. He has all kinds of vision to reach the world with the Gospel.

The lesson I get from what he said is that: people can cut you off from other people, but people can never cut you off from God. Make sure you are always reading the Bible and praying and getting to know Him. He is readily available to us.

II. The Identity of the Church [18-21]

Church is mentioned two times in the book of Matthew. In this chapter 16, it is talking about the universal church, all the believers of Jesus Christ. Two chapters later, in chapter 18, it talks about the local church. They are related because local churches make up the universal church. In Matthew 28, the goal is to make disciples of all nations, and baptize them so that they can come into the local church. Then, through the local church, you train them so that as the church of Jesus Christ, you conquer the world and expand God's Kingdom. But here it's talking about the universal church. We see 5 characteristics about the identity of the church of Jesus Christ. To some of you, church is not really important, but it has to be important because it's important to Jesus Christ.

A. The Church is built on the foundation of Christ the rock [18]

There are a few complicated factors here. Who is this rock? Some people think it means Peter, but I believe "rock" means Jesus Christ Himself. Peter is an apostle just like the prophets in the Old Testament. The prophets had the name of God as their names like Elijah. That name of God was their prophetic message in their lifetime. So, Peter meaning "rock" is representative of Christ and that will be his message. In fact, Peter isn't a rock at all but like a pebble or a stumbling block most of the times. He becomes a rock when he becomes more like Jesus Christ. He is saying that he is a pebble, but Jesus Christ is a rock. I believe Jesus gives this name "rock" to Peter to show who he's pointing towards and who Jesus Christ is. So, "on this rock" means Jesus Christ himself. Another proof of that is when Peter preaches in Acts 4 and then again when he writes about the church of Jesus Christ in 1 Peter, he says that Jesus Christ is the stone and the rock and cornerstone.

Acts 4:11

¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

When you examine what Peter says and thinks throughout his life, I think Peter took any rock or any stone as Jesus Christ. This is how he preaches in Acts 4:11. How clear could he be? Jesus is the stone.

1 Peter 2:5,8

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁸ and

*"A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense."*

Jesus Christ is the rock and we are like living stones, related to Him, being built up as a spiritual house and temple of God.

Ephesians 2:20

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Apostles represent the New Testament and prophets represent the Old Testament. Peter took "rock" as Jesus Christ too, not his own title.

B. The Church is built and owned by Jesus Christ [18]

Verse 18 says "I". Jesus Christ is doing it. He is using us, but don't be too pressured. "Will" means it's going to happen with certainty. "Build" means it's going to take time. "My" means the church of Jesus Christ belongs to Jesus

Christ. I have been a pastor at a church called Covenant Fellowship Church. But it's not my church, I belong to it, it doesn't belong to me, because it belongs to Jesus Christ. So, don't criticize any church if it is of Jesus Christ. We are ones who are called out of selfish, sinful, worldly lifestyles to self-sacrificing, Christ-following, Christ-picturing people for the church of Jesus Christ.

C. The Church is called out of the Kingdom of Hades [18]

Verse 18 says "*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*". There are many controversial interpretations about that. But it is generally saying that the Gates of Hades are the gates of death in the Jewish mindset. Probably some people say hell, because physical death represents and pictures eternal, spiritual death. So inside the gate is a realm of death that came into the world because of sin. It is a realm of wrath of God. The gates of Hades are the gates that make death look powerful and secure and invincible as if what is dead is dead forever and can never get out of death. But Jesus says that the gates will not stop Him for rescuing His people. So the church is called out of the Kingdom of Hades. But if they are called out of something, they must be called into something else.

D. The Church is called into the Kingdom of Heaven [19]

Verse 19 says "*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*". This is the whole theme in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus Christ is the King and when we belong to Him, He is expanding the Kingdom of God within our hearts through the realm of our lives. He is giving us Himself so that through Him we can expand God's Kingdom.

We have morning prayer at our church and usually the guys that are the "gate keepers", the ones who open the doors in the morning, are pretty good. However, there are a few days when I come up and see a lot of people standing outside because the guy who has the keys didn't show up. Then, we hear a loud sound and a car pulls up. He opens the door and we all go in to pray. It's like he has the key to the kingdom of Heaven. He has the key so that we can have the access. It is like that for us, we have the key through Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, we can enter into the presence of God and the throne of Heaven to have the access to the grace available to us.

E. The Church is uncontainable and unstoppable [20-21]

Verse 21 says "*From that time Jesus began to show his disciples*". This is the turning point of Matthew. Before this, Jesus had alluded to death indirectly only once in Matthew 9 and His resurrection only once in Matthew 12. But he begins to teach the disciples openly and repeatedly from this time on. The end of verse 21 says "*be killed, and on the third day be raised*". He's killed meaning that He will go in like everyone else, into Hades, the realm of death and the curse of God, but He's going to come out, where no one else can, in resurrection by kicking the door open. He will open the door of Hades from the inside. He gets in by dying and gets out by resurrection. The gates are His through resurrection power.

Revelation 1:18

¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

The keys were kept on the inside. No one was able to open it. That's why He went in, came out and brought the keys with Him and He will build His church. Now

we have it because we have the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Death will keep none.

You need to belong to a local church. Be a part of it and receive grace through it. God will bless you through it and use it, no matter what you feel or don't feel. Receive the blessings and release the blessings to impact your community.

Matthew 16:13

¹³ *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

Caesarea Philippi was the center of Galilee. Caesarea contains the name "Caesar". To earn the name, the most developed and most worshiped of Caesar had to happen. It had to be a good enough city for Caesar to be willing to give his name to the place. It was perhaps one of the most worldly places in Israel. The place that was most opposite of rule of Christ. Self is the foundation and Caesar is elevated and there Jesus stands where there are sinners, idolaters, and the most worldly and says, "I will build my church." Church of Jesus Christ is to be in the center of the world. Matthew 28 says to go to all nations, to all ethnic groups. Christ has an unwavering commitment to gather the church from all the people of the world. We see the wideness of his authority and the beauty of each ethnicity. You need to be involved in the local church. Be a Matthew 9:37-38 worker. Be faithful. And to whoever's around you, love them, preach to them, disciple them, and let God do the rest. God is going to do a lot more. I really believe we haven't seen anything yet. I love my church; do you? Do you have a church you love? If not, there's something wrong. Why do you need to love your church? Because Jesus loves your church. If you die and nobody in your church knows that you died, you don't belong to that church. There has to be a holy entanglement. If you are falling away from the Lord, someone knows you are falling away from the Lord and they protect you and they warn you, pray for you, they beat you, then you belong to that church. Pile up prayer as you plant the church of Jesus Christ and you need to weep for the people and the next generation.

Gaylord Nelson said, "The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard."

You're so concerned about your own life, but you're not concerned about others. We need to be concerned about our generation as well as the next generations, whose praise and appreciation we will not hear, because then you are learning to care about the kingdom of God. One of the ways to love Jesus is to love your local church. Pay tithe and give offering, pray, don't criticize. Be a part of the solution to the problems you have in the church. Maybe that's why God sent you because you see that problem and can be a part of the solution.

III. The Identity of the Enemy [22-23]

²² *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you."* ²³ *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

Verse 22 says "And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him". Think about this, Peter began to rebuke Jesus and ask what he was doing because he was still a young man.

Jesus was saying that he was going to die, and Peter was saying no, no, no. It's a very human response if someone says they're going to die. The proper thing to do is that we say no. Peter expected Jesus to thank him for the kind thoughts, but it is what God wants me to do. But he says, "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me.*" How does the enemy work? We can get some insight from here because we have to understand how Satan works in our life. Satan in Hebrew means "adversary, enemy". Devil in Greek is "diablo" which means "slander, accuser". His name tells a lot about how he works. He is the enemy and he works through slandering, accusing, and lies, and dividing the relationship between God and one another in the church of Jesus Christ.

A. Direct influence

Satan can work through direct influence.

Matthew 4:10

¹⁰ *Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."*

This is when Jesus is tempted, and Satan came to Jesus with an attempt at direct influence. I believe Satan can directly work with a person like Eve. However, most of the time it is not like this. Satan is not omnipresent, so he can only be in one place at a time. Usually if you have some demonic experience or you're sleeping and you can't move your body, don't worry too much because they're small ones. Big ones are not around you. Big ones are in places like Washington, D.C. because they are places of importance and powerful people. You don't have to worry too much. If you experience these things, just keep sleeping. Say to them to get out in Jesus' name. If it doesn't, don't worry, they can't really do anything to you because you have Jesus. So, very rarely, Satan can work directly.

B. Indirect influence

Luke 4:13

¹³ *And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.*

Did he work like this all the time? It's not recorded. There were not many times Satan worked directly, but perhaps a lot more times where he worked indirectly. It is mostly through indirect influence that Satan works through. One of them is through Peter. Still, the even scarier thing is that there is worldwide influence of Satan.

C. Worldwide influence

Revelation 12:9

⁹ *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

How is Satan able to be a deceiver of the whole world? I believe it is mostly through indirect influence through people.

D. Indirect influence through people

Matthew 16:23

²³ *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

It's not Satan directly working to Jesus, but Satan indirectly to Jesus through Peter. It's not Satan that came to Peter, telling him what to say and to say to Jesus to not go to the cross. I don't think Satan directly came to Peter but rather through the worldly, human thoughts that is contrary to what the cross says. To walk on the wide path, not the narrow path. So that you would go away from the Lord and the cross. A human being's wrong thoughts and lies can influence other people. We can be like Peter often and it's leading them away from Christ. Basically the content of what Peter was saying was don't go to the cross, don't carry to the cross, don't deny yourself, don't follow Christ.

I read a quote from a sociologist and he was talking about how many people lived on this earth in the past 2000 years, several billion people. Yet about 3000 people have influenced all these people. About 3000 people have shaped the culture through their writings, creation of religion, philosophy. It's coming out of the mind of a few people and it becomes a belief and lifestyle that others live by. There's incredible cultural influence. Now it might not be a false prophet but where are the false prophets nowadays? It can be the music that we hear, things that we read, what we watch. Never listen or read or watch without thinking. Never. Everything has a value because it comes out of somebody whose thoughts and hearts are either telling you to follow Christ or not to follow Christ. And through all these things Satan wants you to not follow Christ, not live a cross-shaped life. So, Satan can directly work with a few people in history and they can be incredibly influential and those things become a pervasive part of the culture and it's telling us don't go to the cross. I'm not saying everything that's a part of the culture is bad but often Satan is speaking through other people, the media and the culture. We need to learn how to discern through the Word of God. It doesn't mean you can never listen to anything else but Christian music or read anything else expect the Bible. Read the Bible and read everything else through the Bible. Our goal is not defense and to be away from the Word so that we will not sin. Our goal is offense and influencing the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to know how to go into the culture and influence it, rather than be influenced by it. Let God speak to us so that we talk to them and let God influence them through us. We are such intellectuals that watch everything else expect the Bible. You learn incredible things in chemistry classes but elementary knowledge of the Bible. Raise your norm of understanding the Bible. Know how to think. That God can use you to influence the culture rather than the culture influence you and you avoid the cross. These things when you hear it makes your worldly instead of Word of God, wordly. Real danger of worldliness is not necessarily that it causes you to sin or fall, though it may, rather real danger is that makes you mediocre unless effective for the kingdom. Divided hearts and unfocused lives are the problem, like divided fingers make for a less powerful punch. Five gathered is a lot stronger than one. Divided hearts makes you a powerless person. We become dim beams of light in the dark world that needs bright lights to guide them by the powerfully focused people. Live a simple life with purpose and motive. Everything we do with a simple purpose of loving God. Do not be distracted. The problem for millennials is that there's so many choices. So, you are constantly looking around but choose a few things to focus on and become great at. In the

most important years of your life, make sure you are SERVING, instead of searching. Don't spend the best years of your life seeking but spend them SERVING. Make a choice as early as possible. The right things so that you can become great at it so that you can be effective for the kingdom of God and God can use you in it and through it.

IV. The Identity of the Followers [24]

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

A. If anyone would come after me

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

There are two paths in life: either you live for yourself or you live for Christ, you follow Christ or you don't follow Christ and follow your own dreams. You have two choices in life, that's it. Anything besides following and living for Jesus Christ is another path. Though you might fail and fall, you have to be committed to it. Don't seek for happiness first to lead to your commitment because your commitment will not last. Commit first, then happiness will follow.

B. Let him deny himself

NO. Some people interpret this as misery. But this passage is saying that we stink because of our sinful desires. We want to do the wrong things so many times and that is the part we need to deny ourselves. It does not mean that you will never get what you want or denial of all things you enjoy doing or are good at doing. You are on a totally different path, living for a different person, Jesus Christ. It does not mean denial of my purpose. It does mean denial of my desire but for His desire and His will that often leads to His glory. Denial of my will for His. Sometimes we think of it as we are losing ourselves. Unlike a drop of water that loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being when he follows Christ, rather he finds it. He finds who he's created to be.

C. Take up his cross

YES. When we are to take up our cross or become a sacrifice, it's not for accomplishment of something because Jesus Christ has already done that, but more so for the display of what He has accomplished and done. God will use that to show power so that we can point forward to what He has done so that people can see Him and find salvation in Jesus Christ. We can carry our own crosses in different spheres of our lives, family, workplace. Jesus is writing through us. In our diversity, we show how beautiful and worthy, wide, and great Jesus Christ is.

D. Follow me

WOW. Every day be wowed by Jesus. He'll give you daily strength and transformation.

Mark 1:17

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

He strengthens and empowers us by his grace and mercy. He transforms us so that we can become who he created us to be. That's who we are. In your failures, be

wowed by his forgiveness as you follow Him. In your weakness, be wowed by his strength. In your suffering, be wowed by his compassion and comfort. In your joy, be wowed by his laughter. In your daily life, be wowed by his faithful, loyal love.

Who does he use to build his church? Peter, or “rock”, but he was more like a pebble, a stumbling block. God calls him, not for his strength, but for his weakness. You try to be in control of your life, your control is like control of a surfer, you lose it very soon. You cannot control the waves—circumstances and problems—that will come at you.

If I were to choose 20 people to start a church, Peter would not be one of them. He is arrogant, brash, acts and talks without thinking, rebellious, disloyal. Again, Jesus called Peter not for his strength, but for his weakness. Why? So that we hear about this and everyone will know that we need Jesus and if we follow Him He will rescue us and forgive us and use us and make us like Him. This pebble really became a “rock” in the first generation as a leader of the church of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Do you like Batman, Superman, or Spiderman? We do not need to be like these heroes, we only need to point to “THE HERO”. In fact, we are not like Batman, Superman, or Spiderman, but we are like the lady that they save. Nobody remembers her. They only remember the hero. May the world remember Jesus Christ as the one who saved us. Even if they don’t remember us 50 years later, may they remember Jesus Christ.

Three phrases of encouragement:

1) Never quit. You will fall, you will stumble, but when you hit the rock bottom, know that your bottom is Jesus Christ. Always fall on the rock. You will never go lower than Jesus Christ. He will cleanse you and forgive you. Go to Him again and again. He is your rock solid foundation of your justification.

2) Never stop. Never stop growing. Keep going to Jesus Christ in Word and prayer. Jesus Christ is our foundation and cornerstone. We are living stones, we are growing, we are part of the body of Jesus Christ. We will continue to grow and strengthen one another. We are interconnected. You grow, I’m growing. That’s why we should be concerned about one another’s growth in all parts of the world. The essence of the church of Jesus Christ is to never stop growing and to never stop being hungry. I, as the head pastor of my church, better be the hungriest one. The leader is someone who is the most hungry in that group. The leader is so hungry, he or she puts that group on fire for Jesus Christ. A leader isn’t someone with a strong voice. A leader is someone who has most grace and most Jesus. Size of a person is size of Jesus in Him. Be hungry. Set people around you on fire for Jesus.

3) Never in vain. Whatever you do for Jesus, your work in the Lord, is never in vain.

Daniel 2:38-40, 44

³⁸ and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. ³⁹ Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these.

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

King Nebuchadnezzar was arrogant but the most powerful person at that time. He was the king of a superpower nation, Babylonian kingdom. God graciously shows him in his dream what His kingdom is like. In the dream, which Daniel interprets later, God shows Nebuchadnezzar the statue. "You are the head of gold" refers to the Babylonian kingdom. "Another kingdom" made out of silver which is going to be the Neopersian kingdom in history. "A third kingdom of bronze" which is the Greek kingdom, Alexander the Great. "A fourth kingdom" of iron plate which is Roman kingdom. They were actually kingdoms in history. God graciously shows Daniel so that he can interpret it, so that Nebuchadnezzar can repent of his sins and submit himself to God.

The best thing that he shows is that this statue which represents the human kingdom is going to be broken by this.

Daniel 2:34

³⁴ As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.

Somewhere in the Roman kingdom a stone cut out by no human hand, who is that? Jesus Christ. Would break this human kingdom into pieces. Kingdom of Jesus Christ will shatter all human kingdom and kingdom of Jesus Christ will last forever. Whatever you do, even the smallest thing you do for a child or in the church of Jesus Christ or for your family so that Jesus Christ can be shown is building the kingdom of God in you and through you. Jesus Christ has to be our lowest foundation and our highest elevation.

Arthur Gordon said, "There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one candle." Jesus Christ will use it. Build His Kingdom. Never be proud because we are of God, but also never belittle yourself either because you are of God. You are made in His image. He is in You. You are nothing but He is great. He is working in you. So, never quit. Don't stay in your puddle of tears. If you haven't seen Jesus at the bottom, you're not low enough. He's underneath you. Go to Him again and again and again. Never stop, his grace is available. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His grace and His love are fresh every morning for He is faithful. He's going to strengthen us. Keep on serving. Whatever we do, smallest to the greatest, it's not in vain. Jesus Christ is building His kingdom. It's who we are, that's what life is about. Reevaluate and reorganize. As you evaluate everything, our heart, our thinking process, our lives, our priorities, our purpose, our time consumption, our schedule, why we are studying or working, why we want to get married, why we are raising our children. Let's evaluate, how in the world am I going to live for his kingdom? How is the church of Jesus Christ being built through my involvement with these things around me? How is God being glorified? Is he my lowest foundation and my highest elevation?