

# True Discipleship

## Losing Our Soul-Life for Christ

*"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it." Luke 9:23-24; & Mark 8:34-35*

By this statement, Jesus defined discipleship and what it means to be a Christian. There is no way around what Jesus said. We must take up our cross daily and lose our life for His sake or we cannot follow Him. The Greek word for life used here is *psyche*, which means our soul-life. Our soul-life is based on our natural personality and includes our natural attitudes, affections and abilities. At this point, we must strongly reinforce that the only way we can lose our soul-life is to know what Jesus Christ has already accomplished for us on the cross. When Jesus Christ died, we died with Him (Romans 6:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14). Our sinful nature was crucified with Him and removed from us (Romans 6:6). Therefore, by Christ's death, we have already died to the soulish life of this world (Galatians 6:14). This is a divine fact that only God can reveal to you.

Since God created our soul, He does not want to destroy our soul. However, He does want to restore our soul to its proper place and use. When Adam fell, man began to live independently by the power of his soul rather than by the life of God. But then, two thousand years ago, through the death of His only Son, God "undid" the fall and laid the foundation for restoring man to His purpose and fellowship. Now that we are born again, we no longer have Adam's sinful nature within us; instead, we have Christ's Spirit indwelling us (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20). But now that we are in Christ, the question is, "Will we continue to be governed by the strength of our soul or will we be governed by the power of His Holy Spirit?"

When we live by the soul, our life is controlled by our natural preferences and capabilities. The Son of God also had a human soul but He never

acted from his soul's initiative; He only acted according to His Father's will (John 5:19; 30; 8:28). When we live by faith in Christ who lives in us, our soul is submitted to His Spirit and is a holy vessel for His use. However, if we live by the power of our personality, then our soul is hostile to Christ's Spirit and is of no use to Him. Therefore, in order for Jesus Christ to be able to use us as His bondservants, we must die to living based on our soul-life (our natural desires and abilities). This is what it means to be conformed to Christ's death (Philippians 3:10).

Tragically, most professing Christians today are governed by the power of their soul rather than by the life of Christ. Even if we lead an admirable "moral" life based on our natural self-discipline, our witness is limited to the power of what our natural man can accomplish. This is no Christian witness at all. The reason for this dilemma is that most Christians do not know (believe and act on) the truth that they have died with Christ. As a result, they remain captive to their natural temperament and rely on their natural ability to serve God. If we are particularly naturally gifted and talented, we may impress others with our Christian ministry but we won't impress God. Nor will we have any impact on Satan if the source of our ministry is our own soul-power.

How can we be governed by the power of God's Spirit rather than our soul-life? First, we must know with certainty that we have been crucified with Christ. This is the only basis for losing our soul-life. Unless we have divine revelation that God included us in Christ's death, we will try to change our soul-life by our own willpower and effort, which only leads to pride and further sin. Next, we must apply the cross to our soul-life by identifying with Christ's death daily (when Christ died, we died with Him). This means we will often have to go against the voice of our soul and our natural temperament. There is only one way we can resist gratifying our soul's natural desires and reject fulfilling our soul's natural potential. This is by always reminding ourselves that we have died with Christ and He is now our life.

This is the secret to overcoming sin and losing our soul-life for Christ's sake. When we stay rooted by faith in Christ's death, His resurrection life will be formed in us. There are two ways God helps us abide in Christ's death so He might transform our "unconverted" soul. First, God sends us His Word, the sword of the Spirit, to expose and separate any impure soulish mixture in our faith (Hebrews 4:12). For example, we may think we love sharing the gospel until the Holy Spirit shows us that we love hearing ourselves speak. And we may think we love ministering to others until the Holy Spirit shows us that we love fulfilling our natural talent. Next, God sends us trials as a "sentence of death" to our natural strength so we will only rely on the life of His Son in us (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). When our confidence in our natural ability is broken, we will no longer trust in ourselves to overcome but only trust in what Jesus Christ has accomplished on the cross.

Every disciple who identifies with Christ's death has the mark of the cross on their soul. The work of the cross won't destroy our soul; we will still possess our soul and its faculties. But when the mark of the cross is imprinted on our soul, we will stay submitted to Christ rather than independently asserting our will. We will also not depend on the power of our soul to do Christ's work. The only way we can restore our soul is to lose it for Christ's sake (Matthew 16:25). This is true discipleship that leads to eternal life. How can we possibly restore the church to its right place in Christ if our own soul is not restored to its right place in Christ? May God open our eyes to see what His Son has fully accomplished for us on the cross so we can follow Him with all our heart and soul. This is what it means to come under Christ's Sovereignty and be His true disciples and bondservants.

*"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... The man who loves his soul-life will lose it, while the man who hates his soul-life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Luke 14:27 & John 12:25*