

THE MESSIAH FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION (THIRD TIME)

MATHEW 20:17–19

Introduction

This is the third time that Mathew stresses the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ had warned His disciples time and again that He was to die and be raised on the third day (Mt. 16:21-23; 17:22-23; Mk.8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34. These passages should be studied with this passage. Mathew 17:22-23 includes most, if not all, of the New Testament passages on the death and resurrection of Christ. There is an abundance of material in these references.)

Jesus Christ had to get three facts across to His disciples.

- I. Jesus took the disciples aside (v. 17)
- II. Jesus was to be betrayed and delivered for prosecution (v. 18).
- III. Jesus was to be delivered for execution (v. 19).
- IV. Jesus was to be raised from the dead (v. 19).

I. *Mathew 20:17 Jesus Took His Disciples Aside*

Jesus took the disciples aside to get all alone. The word *took* (parelaben) means that He took His disciples “aside.” There is great meaning in these words.

1. There is tenderness and warmth and intimacy. He needed and wanted them close to Him, right by His side. He needed to feel and know their presence, in particular that they were with Him as He *went up to Jerusalem* to face death. They also needed His presence, to have Him right beside them and to feel what He felt. Such memories would help them as they faced the trials that lay ahead of them.
2. There is tremendous pressure and tension. The very air surrounding them was tight. There seemed to be a heavy weight hanging over the Lord’s head. He seemed to be consumed in deep thought — the kind of thought that quickens a person’s pace, tightens the muscles of the body, and strains the expressions of the face. The pressure and tension cannot be overstated. Mark expressed it well: “They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished [bewildered, perplexed], while those who followed were afraid [seized with alarm]” (Mk. 10:32).

Two events show just how much pressure must have been building at this time:

- => The experience in the garden of Gethsemane where the pressure was so great that Christ sweated great drops of blood (Lk. 22:44)
 - => The experience of the cross where Christ was to suffer for the sins of the world, bearing to the ultimate degree all the pain possible for a heart, mind, and body to bear (1 Pet. 2:24; see Mt. 27:46; 2 Cor. 5:21)
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3. There is purpose and encouragement. This is seen in two facts.
 - a. Jesus was deliberately “going up to Jerusalem.” He did not have to go. He was fully Man, and as Man, He could choose what to do (Heb. 2:16-18; 4:15). He knew what lay ahead, yet He would not shirk God’s purpose.
 - b. Jesus deliberately took the disciples apart to prepare them for His coming death. They were to face the most shocking event of their lives — an event so shocking that it could potentially devastate their lives and hinder God’s plan for the ages. Christ had to prepare them to withstand the shock of His death (Mt. 16:21-28).

There are at least two reasons why Jesus could not reveal His death by crucifixion to the public.

- 1) Many would have become discouraged from following Him. They would have feared the Romans who were to be the executioners of Christ. The fervour of the crowds would have cooled, and they would have forsaken Him. Seeing great crowds desert Christ could have discouraged the disciples tremendously, and this was not what they needed at this time. They needed encouragement and preparation for facing the cross.
- 2) Some of the people would be tempted to defend Christ, perhaps striking first. Some of the disciples, perhaps all, could be caught up in the fervour of such an ill-advised reaction.

Thought 1. Christ wants to draw all of us “aside.”

- 1) He wants moments of tenderness and warmth with us, many such moments (Rev. 3:20; see Psa. 145:18; Lk. 18:1; 1 Jn. 1:3).
- 2) He wants us to draw near to Him in times of pressure and tension (Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 4:15-16; Psa. 34:18).
- 3) He wants us to draw near to Him for purpose and encouragement (Isa. 43:10; Mt. 11:28-30; Jas. 4:8-10). He wants us to guard against *shirking* God’s purpose and to be more and more prepared to proclaim His death. He wants us fortified against the shock of being rejected, ridiculed, abused, and even persecuted as we go about fulfilling the purpose of God.

Thought 2. There are times to minister to the great crowds and times not to minister to them. The crowd was not yet ready to hear about the death of Christ. People have to be fed progressively. All have not reached the same level of spiritual growth and spiritual maturity.

- 1) Some are new in Christ. They are not yet grounded in the basics. They are not ready for the *meat* of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2-3).
- 2) Some live carnal lives. They are not spiritually minded. They would not have the interest nor would they understand (1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb. 5:11-14).
- 3) Some are unregenerate. They are in the church but are not followers of Christ. They have no interest in Christ and would be offended by the cross of Christ.

II. *Mathew 20:18 The Death of Jesus Christ*

Christ was to be betrayed and delivered for prosecution.

1. The betrayer is not named. However, note the words will be *betrayed* (*paradothesetai*). The phrase means *will be turned over*. It is the same Greek word translated *will turn over* in the next verse. Who turned Jesus over to be prosecuted and executed? Jesus did not name the person. Scripture teaches that three persons delivered Jesus to be crucified (See notes Mathew 17:22).
2. The prosecutors of Jesus are named. They were the Jews, in particular the leaders among the Jews, the chief priests and Scribes and elders (See *Jesus Christ, Opposition*, Mt. 16:21). But note: they were to be only the prosecutors not the executioners. They were forbidden by law to execute anyone (Jn. 18:31). They had to turn Him over to the Gentiles for execution. There is symbolism seen in this fact:
 - a. Both Jew and Gentile (the world) are guilty of the death of God's Son.
 - b. Christ was to bear the sin of both Jew and Gentile in His death. He was to reconcile both, that is, reconcile the whole world to God.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Eph 2:16 And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Col 1:20 And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

1 John 2:2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Thought 1. There is a truth that is seldom thought about: we are to *think often about death* even as Christ was obsessed with His death. There are three reasons we are not to shun and deny the thought.

- 1) Death is an eternal matter even as life is an eternal matter (2 Cor. 10:5).
- 2) Death is no longer to be feared (Heb. 2:14-15; 2 Tim. 1:7).
- 3) We are to live — dying daily, constantly denying self (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23; see Rom. 8:36; Tit. 3:12-15).

MATHEW 20:18 JESUS CHRIST, DEATH

The pain of suffering reached its summit in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He suffered pain to the ultimate degree, in an absolute sense. Yet in the midst of such terrible suffering, there is something that is very precious — a thought, a truth that should be very, very precious to us. It is this: *Jesus' death was dear to His own heart* — dear

despite the terrible suffering He was to endure. In a way unknown to man and which can never be understood by man, Jesus set His heart and face toward the cross. He was consumed and obsessed with the cross. Why? Because the cross was the focus of God's purpose throughout all eternity.

1. The cross was dear to His heart because it was His Father's will. In dying, He could please His Father, and pleasing His Father was the supreme objective of His life (Eph. 5:2).
2. The cross was dear to His heart because it was the means by which He was to gain many brothers (Rom. 8:29).
3. The cross was dear to His heart because through death He was to be made *the author* of man's salvation (Heb. 2:9-10).
4. The cross was dear to His heart because by death He was to destroy the power of the devil over man, that is, death (Heb. 2:14-15).
5. The cross was dear to His heart because by the cross He was to reconcile all men, reconcile them both to God and to one another (Eph. 2:13-18).
6. The cross was dear to His heart because through death He was to return to His former glory which He had possessed with the Father before the foundation of the world (Jn. 17:1-5). □

MATHEW 16:21 JESUS CHRIST, OPPOSITION

Note the three Jewish groups who were to take the lead in killing Jesus. These were the three groups who made up the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Jewish justice. It was comprised of seventy members.

1. The elders: these were the older and most respected men of a community. The elders were judges of the civil courts and of temporal affairs (Exo. 3:29; 12:21; 24:9; Num. 11:25; 1 S.16:4; Ezr. 10:14; Mt. 27:12).
2. The chief priests: these were primarily the leaders among the Sadducees. They held most of the high offices of Jewish government under Roman rule (See *Saducees*, Acts 23:8). The chief priests were judges of religious affairs.
3. The Scribes: these were primarily Pharisees who held the teaching positions of the nation (See *Scribes*, Lk. 6:2).

Thought 1. Note the three groups who opposed Jesus. They were the very people who should have been following Jesus, the very leaders who should have known God. They should have known God well enough to have recognized His Son the Messiah. But, as with so many in every generation, they were blinded by their own religion, power, wealth, fame, and position. □

ACTS 23:08 SADDUCEES

The Sadducees were the religious and political liberals of Christ's day. They were the wealthy, the aristocratic, the governing class of leaders in Israel. Many Sadducees served on the nation's governing body, the Sanhedrin. The Chief Priest himself was usually a Sadducee who presided over the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin ruled the people on behalf of the Roman empire (Acts 4:1-2; 5:17). The Romans readily saw to it that the Sadducees held the positions of leadership in the nation, for the Sadducees favoured Greek customs over Jewish customs. And they aided the Romans in doing away with religious practices and instituting Greek and Roman customs (Hellenism).

They are thought to have arisen out of the same struggle as the Pharisees around B.C. 175. However, they were always the fewest in number among the various sects of Jewish belief.

Several things should be noted.

1. The Sadducees were secular and materialistic minded. They were the independent thinkers, the rationalists of their day.
2. They were heavily entrenched in the priesthood of Jesus' day (see Acts. 4:1-2; 5:17). They readily collaborated with the Roman government in order to protect their position, power and wealth.
3. For the most part they denied the supernatural: the resurrection and miracles, life after death, and the existence of beings in other dimensions such as angels and spirits (Mt. 22:23; Acts 23:8). To them there was no heaven or hell, no existence whatsoever except on this earth. A man died and was annihilated, just ceased to exist. There was no such thing as rewards or punishment in an afterlife, no eternal life. □

LUKE 06:02

SCRIBES, TEACHERS OF THE LAW, SCRIBAL LAW, PHARISEES

These Pharisees were probably Scribes, the teachers of the law. The Scribes were a profession of men sometimes called lawyers (Mt. 22:35). They were some of the most devoted and committed men to religion in all of history and were of the sect known as the Pharisees. However, every Pharisee was not a Scribe. A Scribe was more of a scholar, more highly trained than the average Pharisee. They had two primary functions.

1. The Scribes copied the written law, the Old Testament Scriptures. In their copying function, they were strict copiers, meticulously keeping count of every letter in every word. This exactness was necessary, for God Himself had given

the written law to the Jewish nation. Therefore, the law was not only the very Word of God, it was the greatest thing in the life of the Jewish nation. It was considered the most precious possession in all the world; consequently, the Jewish nation was committed to the preservation of the law (Neh. 8:1-8). A young Jew could enter no greater profession than the profession of Scribes.

2. The Scribes studied, classified, and taught the moral law. This function brought about the Oral or Scribal Law that was so common in Jesus' day. It was the law of rules and regulations. There were, in fact, so many regulations that over fifty large volumes were required when they were finally put into writing. The great tragedy was that through the centuries, the Jews began to place the Oral law over the written law.

The Scribes felt that the law was God's final word. Everything God wanted man to do could be deduced from it; therefore, they drew out of the law every possible rule they could and insisted that life was to be lived in conformity to these rules. Rules were to be a way of life, the preoccupation of a man's thoughts. At first these rules and regulations were taught by word of mouth; however, in the third century after Christ, they were put into certain writings.

The Halachoth: rules that were to govern the ritual of worship.

The Talmud, made up of two parts.

=> *The Mishnah*: sixty-three discussions of various subjects of the law.

=> *Gemara*: the sacred legends of the people.

Midrashim: the commentaries on the writings.

Hagadci: thoughts on the commentaries. □

III. *Mathew 20:19 The Death of Jesus Christ*

Christ was to be delivered to the Gentiles for torture and execution. Note the three forms of torture mentioned.

=> Mockery: to be ridiculed, scorned, insulted, humiliated, defied, jeered.

=> Flogging: to be beaten with a rod or a whip weighted with either jagged metal or bone chips. Thirty nine or forty lashes were inflicted. The whole purpose of scourging was to inflict severe pain.

=> Crucifixion (see *Jesus Christ; Death*, Mt. 27:26-44 for the terrible suffering of the cross).

Jesus bore the sins of man, suffering the ultimate degree of pain. He suffered pain in an absolute sense.

1. Mentally: while He was being tortured, His mind was bound to be upon why He was suffering. He was thinking about the sin of man and the problem sin had caused God.

Imagine the world's sin, all of it, the enormity and awfulness of it consuming His mind. He was suffering mentally to the ultimate degree.

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

1 John 2:2 *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

2. Spiritually: His heart was being broken. Those whom He loved so much were committing a sin so horrendous it defied imagination. They were rebelling against God so much that they were killing God's own Son.

In addition and even more terrible, His own Father, God Himself, was to turn His back upon Him. God was to separate Himself from His very own Son (Mt.27:46-49; Mk. 15:34). He was beginning to bear, and was going to bear, the judgment, condemnation and punishment due to man — He was going to bear spiritual pain in an absolute sense. The wrath of God's holiness against sin was to be cast against Him.

Isa 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Mark 15:34 *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" — which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

Luke 22:44 *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Heb 2:10 *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

Heb 5:8 *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*

Heb 13:12 *And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

3. Physically: His pain was to be more severe because of the mental and spiritual pressure He was having to bear at the same time. There is also truth to the fact that the more ridicule within a persecutor's heart, the more he tortures his victim (cp. the crown of thorns, royal robe, and excessive mockery of the soldiers). The fact that Christ claimed to be the Son of God aroused the persecutors to inflict more scorn and torture. (cp. Mt. 27:1f.)

Isa 50:6 *I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.*

Zec 13:6 *If someone asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ he will answer, ‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’*

Mat 27:29 *And then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said.*

Mat 27:35 *When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.*

Mat 27:39 *Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads.*

Mark 15:29 *Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days,”*

Thought 1. Jesus suffered the ultimate degree of pain, and He did it *for us*. This fact should break our hearts, yet it seldom does. Why? Because so few of us spend time meditating upon His death — and, among us who do, an even smaller percentage spend anywhere close to the time that should be spent.

MATHEW 27:26–44 JESUS CHRIST, DEATH

The Lord’s sufferings and torture were marked by Divine pain and human cruelty.

1. The divine pain of the Lord Jesus came from being fully conscious of the judgment He was to bear for man — separation from God (Mt. 27:46-49). The pressure of this hellish experience is seen in Gethsemane. Under great emotional stress, the tiny capillaries right under His skin which lined the sweat glands apparently gave way and burst. Jesus sweated great drops of blood. Such an experience causes marked weakness and sometimes a state of shock. The terrifying mystery of this hellish experience is seen in His cry upon the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This was the point at which the great separation from God began.
2. The physical torture He bore at the hands of men was abhorrent. Before the High Priest, an officer struck Jesus across the face (Jn. 18:22). The palace guards blindfolded, mocked, spat upon, and slapped Him in the face: and they kept Him up all night (Lk. 22:63-66).

Before Pilate, the Roman trial: His hands were tied to a post above His head and He was flogged (Jn. 19:1). The prisoner was lashed until He was judged near death by the presiding centurion (Jewish trials allowed only forty lashes).

Still before Pilate: the guards called the whole band of soldiers together and began to mock His claim to be King of the Jews (Mk. 15:16). They threw a robe

around Him and continued to strike Him across the face. They took the sceptre from His hand and used it to whip Him and to drive the thorns even deeper. Finally, they ceased this sadistic treatment and ripped the robe from His back. This tore open the dried blood caked to its lining. Excruciating pain followed (see Mt .27:28-31; Mk. 15:16-20; Jn. 10:1-5).

Bearing the cross itself: it was heavy, very heavy. He had to carry it up and down the streets of the city, taking a meandering route. The Romans did this as a living lesson to all that crime does not pay. Christ just broke down under the load; and Simon, the Cyrene, was forced to carry the cross for Him (Mt. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26). □

IV. Mathew 20:19 Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Christ was to be raised from the dead. Covering the resurrection in the same discussion with His death does three major things.

1. The prediction of the resurrection drove the point of the resurrection into the mind of the disciples again. They must forever remember the resurrection. The death of Christ was not the final word.

2 Tim 2:8 *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.*

2. The prediction of the resurrection foreshadowed the power of God. After the Lord's resurrection, the disciples would remember, and the glorious truth of God's power would be reinforced in their minds and hearts forever.

- a. The power of God is victorious.

1 Cor 15:55, 57 *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- b. The power of God does triumph.

Col 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

- c. The power of God does conquer.

Rom 8:37-39 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

3. The prediction of the resurrection foreshadowed the stirring that God's power was going to work in their lives.

- a. The power to encourage and motivate.

Eph 1:18-19 *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.*

2 Tim 1:7 *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

- b. The power to assure and build confidence.

John 20:26-29 *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

- c. The power to give courage and boldness.

Acts 4:23-24 *On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them."*

2 Tim 1:8-9 *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time. ■*

LUKE 09:23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

*Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." **Luke 09:23***

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as

poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up* one's *cross*, to *follow* Christ. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (see Rom. 6:2-10)*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Rom 6:11a *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

Rom 6:13a *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Rom 6:13b *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:13c *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). □

THE PRICE AND MEANING OF GREATNESS MATHEW 20:20–28

Introduction

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. This was to be a momentous visit to the capital. This was the visit when the crisis was to take place, the crisis of His death and subsequent resurrection. He had just shared the fact of the crisis again (vv. 17-19). For months His death and resurrection had consumed His attention and private messages to the disciples (Mt. 16:13-20; 16:21-28; 17:1-13; 17:22; 17:24-27; 20:17). There was no question in the disciples' minds: this visit to Jerusalem was the momentous event for which they had long awaited. Jesus was about to free Israel and set up His kingdom on earth.

We who live today know what Christ meant by His death and resurrection. He was to die for our sins, and He was to be raised again to impart new life to us, but the disciples did not know this. Christ had not yet died nor been raised from the dead. To them, He was speaking of an earthly and material kingdom. If He were about to set up His kingdom, now was the time to seize the promise of position and power in His kingdom. Now was the time to secure the positions of rule and authority. (See *Christ, Messiah*, Mt. 1:18; *Prophecy Fulfilled*, Mt. 11:5; *Messiah, Judgement*, Mt. 11:6; *Jesus, No Publicity*, Mt. 12:16.)

This is what James and John were doing. They were assuring themselves of key positions in Christ's government. (Mt. 18:1-4; Lk. 22:24-30.)

- I. What the sin of ambition is: selfishly seeking personal greatness (vv. 20-21).
- II. What greatness requires: Is a person willing to pay the price (vv. 22-23)?
- III. What greatness is (vv. 24-28).

MATHEW 01:18 CHRIST, MESSIAH

The words *Christ* (christos) and *Messiah* are the same word. Messiah is the Hebrew word and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same person and mean the same thing: *the Anointed One*. The Messiah is *the Anointed One of God*. Mathew says Jesus "is called Christ" (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the *Anointed One of God*, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, the people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfil His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people gullible. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus' trial, is an example (Mk. 15:60f)

The Messiah was thought to be several things.

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David's line who would free the Jewish state as an independent nation and lead it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name "Jesus" shows Him to be man. The name "Christ" shows Him to be God's Anointed One, God's very own Son. Christ is Jesus' official title. It identifies Him officially as *Prophet* (Deu. 18:15-19), *Priest* (Psa. 110:4), and *King* (2 Sam. 7:12-13). These three officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

MATHEW 11:05 PROPHECY, FULFILLED

Jesus was referring to Scripture here. He was telling John that He was fulfilling the predictions of the prophets (Isa. 35:5-6; 61:1-2; see Psa. 72:2; 146:8; Zech. 11:11). Note, however, that Jesus stressed the personal ministry and *not the political*. He omitted the phrases of Isa. 61:1 that could be interpreted that He was a political leader: "proclaiming freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." He needed to get John's attention away from the wrong concept of the Messiah to the true concept. He was reaching out in the power of the Spirit to individuals, saving and restoring them, not reaching out to mobilize people for the deliverance of Israel from Roman enslavement. □

MATHEW 11:06 MESSIAH AND JUDGMENT

Jesus was saying that the Messianic blessing and judgment were coming. Today is the day of salvation, the day of Messianic blessing. Tomorrow will be the day of Messianic fire, the day of judgment against all those who are offended in Christ. The Messianic fire of judgment was John's concern. He did not see Christ's judging the world. But Christ assured John: "Blessing is coming; and *judgment is coming*. Do not be offended because you do not understand everything about me." □

MATHEW 12:16 JESUS — NO PUBLICITY

*Warning them not to tell who he was. **Mathew 12:16***

Why did Jesus withdraw and charge the people not to make Him known?

1. Jesus wished to avoid confrontation with those who sought His life. His hour had not yet come. He did not wish to provoke the religionists to a deliberate conflict putting Himself in premature peril.
2. Jesus did not wish to be pushed forward by public acclaim to assume kingship of the nation. He understood His mission. He had come first to be the Suffering Servant, and He knew that the people were inflammable, aching for deliverance from the Roman conquerors. Too much promotion of His miracles might cause an uprising. He had to prevent an uprising so that He might carry out His mission of dying for the world as the Suffering Servant. Jesus needed time to teach the people what true Messiahship meant. The people thought the Messiah was to overthrow the Roman conquerors and establish Israel as one of the great nations of the world. Jesus had to show that the Messiah's kingdom was spiritual, not material; present and future, not just present; permanent and eternal, not just mortal and temporal.
3. Jesus needed to teach humility. He refused to make a spectacle, to "be seen by men" (v. 19).
4. Jesus wished to give an example of the principle He had laid down: "When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another" (Mt. 10:23). □

I. **Mathew 20:20–21** *Ambition and Personal Greatness*

Note the sins of ambition and of seeking personal greatness. They are fivefold.

1. Ambition is self-seeking. James and John were interested in position for honour only, not for the purpose of serving. Pomp and ceremony, position and recognition, power and authority were on their minds, not ministering to and serving people.
2. Ambition is deceptive and uses people. Note how deceptively James and John and their mother came to Jesus. The sons persuaded their mother to use her influence with Jesus. She was a tool for their ambition. By her having taken the lead, they hoped Christ would think the request originated with her and not with them. He had already rebuked them for self-ambition (Mt. 18:1-4). Ambition often causes us to use people. Too often we put desire for things, position, power and influence before and over people. Some even deceive and use others to achieve their ends.
3. Ambition misuses influence, position and power. James and John along with Peter formed the inner circle around Christ. Christ gave them opportunities to witness

several events the others were not permitted to see. They felt more favoured and felt that their position was superior to the other disciples (See *Inner Circle*, Mk. 9:2). This became especially true when James and John used their family's position to influence Jesus (See *Salome*, Mt. 20:20-21).

4. Ambition arises from pride. They felt more honoured, more special, more preferred; and they were showing their conceit. They fully expected their request to be granted. Their kneeling with their mother (probably behind their mother) showed this. There is always contempt for others in pride. Feeling more honoured and more preferred elevates one over others and treats them as inferior.
5. Ambition misunderstands the facts. James and John did not understand Jesus' death and resurrection. They misinterpreted it. They made the same mistake that man so often makes: they spiritualized God's Word.

When Christ said that He was to die, they probably thought He was referring to the conflict that was going to take place as He overthrew Roman domination. When Christ said that He was to arise, they probably thought it referred to the rising of God's kingdom to power. They thought only in terms of an earthly or temporal power. They missed the point entirely — missed the literal death and resurrection of God's Son which was to save man spiritually and eternally. The point is this: ambition centres attention on securing things now, not eternally. It interprets life and the values of life only in terms of earthly power, position, recognition and wealth. It fails to see that this is ever so brief and does not last. It misunderstands the facts entirely.

Thought 1. There is good, healthy ambition; and there is bad, unhealthy ambition. Good ambition gives purpose, meaning, and significance to life; it builds drive, initiative, self-esteem and much, much more. All such qualities are healthy and needed by every human being. We must all feel worthwhile, yet true inner health comes only from serving others, not from position and power. This is what James and John were missing.

Bad ambition is false ambition. It is deceptive in every conceivable way. It may lead to exaltation and power, but it corrupts and destroys. It eats away at a person's body as well as a person's spirit and consumes and misuses people. Sin corrupts and destroys, so false ambition is sin.

Thought 2. There is nothing wrong with high positions of responsibility and authority. Leadership and organization, government and law, teachers and learners, parent and child — all are essential. However, all positions should exist not to *lord it over people* but to serve people. We are to seek to serve people, not seek to rule people. Our ambition should not be to *dominate* but to serve. This was James' and John's error. It is often ours too. There is a tremendous difference between leading and serving.

Thought 3. There is something very commendable about James and John in this experience: their strong faith in Jesus and His kingdom. They were wrong in their ambition, but they were right about Jesus Himself. He was the true Messiah who had come to rule over the works and lives of men. They were just wrong about His method. He was going to do it spiritually, not militarily.

Thought 4. James and John had left all for Christ (Mt. 19:27-29). They had travelled about the country and suffered with Him for three years. Now they thought their trials were almost over. Christ was going to change things and raise them up above the sufferings, and He was to reward their trust. They were so wrong. Like so many of us, they misunderstood what following Christ really meant. Christ does not remove our trials; He carries us through them. He does not take suffering away; He delivers us through suffering. Our rest from labour and trials and our crown come in the next world, not this world.

MATHEW 20:20–21 SALOME

The mother of James and John was named Salome (Mt. 27:56; see Mk. 15:40; 16:1). An interesting fact is that Salome was probably the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, which means that James and John were first cousins of Jesus. We see this in Mark's and John's accounts of the crucifixion. Mark says that Salome was at the cross with Mary, Jesus' mother (Mk. 15:40). John simply says, '[Jesus'] mother... his mother's sister....' (John 19:25). □

II. *Mathew 20:22–23 Greatness in His Kingdom*

What does greatness require, and, is a person willing to pay the price? Christ told James and John how to become great; greatness in His kingdom requires four things.

1. The price of contemplating suffering and death. A person must understand that greatness involves the suffering of discipline and obedience and the death of self and comfort, of indulgence and extravagance. The person must think about, contemplate, and understand what he is seeking. Thinking takes time; it takes concentration, energy, and effort, it means many long and tiring hours and days of concentration in study and learning. It means knowing and understanding what one asks. It means knowing where one is, has been, and should be going in life.
2. The price of bearing the cup of suffering. It means a willingness to die to self daily and to give one's life in bearing whatever has to be borne in order to serve Christ (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23).
3. The price of determination. James and John answered Christ: "We can." Greatness is accepting the challenge because one loves the Lord and is willing to share in His sufferings and death no matter the cost.

4. The price of unshakable loyalty to Christ. Greatness is enduring and persevering no matter the suffering or denial demanded. James and John both drank the cup (See *John* and *Ransom for many*, Mt. 20:23).

Luke 14:33 *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

Luke 9:23-24 *Then he said to them all: “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 14:26-27 *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters — yes, even his own life — he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

Phil 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

Thought 1. Christ pulls no punches. If we desire greatness, there is a price to pay, a tremendous price. If we wish to have the crown He gives, there is a bitter cup to be drunk.

Thought 2. When we say “yes” to Christ, we have to mean it. There has to be an iron determination to follow Him. We must be able to say with James and John, “We can” — no matter the cup. However, we must always remember that *we are able* only through the strength of His resurrected power.

Thought 3. Note that Christ did not write James and John off because they were wrong and had committed a terrible sin. He did not give up on them, cast them aside as useless. He simply corrected them, taught them the truth, and continued to use them. Note something else: Christ trusted them. He knew their hearts deep within, knew they would come through and, in the final analysis, pay any price for Him.

There is a tremendous lesson here. Christ believes in us and counts us trustworthy (1 Tim. 1:12; see Rom. 8:28f). Even when we fail and begin to dislike and hate ourselves, He loves and cares for us, wanting to correct us, teach us, and set us back on our feet on the path of usefulness.

MATHEW 20:23 JAMES

James was killed by Herod. He was the first apostle to drink the cup of martyrdom. □

MATHEW 20:23 JOHN

John lived to be around one hundred years old and died in bed as far as we know.

However, he drank the cup of suffering in a most distressful way:

=> He witnessed the sufferings of Christ's death.

=> He lived through the murder and deaths of all the other apostles.

=> He lived a long life of banishment and exile on the island of Patmos. □

III. *Mathew 20:23–28 True Greatness*

What is true greatness? It is four things.

1. Greatness that is eternal is of God. There is no greatness other than that of God, not a greatness that brings eternal position and honour. The greatness conceived by men is superficial: it fades away. Note two things Christ seemed to be saying.
 - a. Christ said that some will sit on His right hand and some on His left hand. God is preparing to bestow such honour upon some. This seems to point toward degrees of glory in heaven (see vv. 26-27).
 - b. Christ was saying that the right to reign with Him was to be determined by God alone (that is, His absolute justice). He also made a distinction between *the great* who only commit themselves to serve, and the *first* (greatest) who commit themselves to be *bond-slaves* (v. 26; see v. 27).

Mat 10:27 *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.”*

John 12:26 *“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”*

John 13:14 *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.”*

John 21:16 *Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 Cor 7:22 *For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.*

Col 3:24 *Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

2. Greatness is not dominion over people. The disciples still thought the Messiah's kingdom would be the restoration of Israel as an earthly nation and power. The ten other disciples were indignant because they desired the highest positions themselves.

They would have been worried, not angered, by such evil and selfish behaviour if they had not had the same feelings. The world's view of greatness is twofold.

- a. The external view is measured by power, fame, recognition, influence, authority, dominion, and position.
- b. The internal view is measured by wealth, buildings, vehicles, and machines, and the ability to work and achieve goals. The world seeks after these things; individuals as well as nations seek after them. In fact, most men are caught up to some degree in *worldly greatness*, seeking some recognition, position, influence, fame, and wealth. Few are void of *worldly greatness*.

Prov 17:19 *He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.*

Prov 25:27 *It is not good to eat too much honey, nor is it honourable to seek one's own honour.*

Mat 23:12 *"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."*

John 5:44 *"How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?"*

3. Greatness is serving others. The great are they who minister. The greatest, the first among all, are they who are bond-slaves. He is bound to a master by law. The slave was owned by the master; he was totally possessed by his master. The slave served the master and he existed only for the purpose of service.

Note the two words *first* (protos) and *slave* (doulos, bond slave). Christ made a significant distinction between what He said in verse 26 and verse 27. The difference is striking and challenging. There is...

- the *great* (v. 26) vs. the *first* (v. 27)
- the *minister* (v. 26) vs. the *slave* (v. 27)

Another way to see the difference is...

- the *great* are they who are *servants*
- the *first* are they who are *slaves*

What Christ was saying is this: among His disciples, the person who serves is great, but the person who is a slave is the first. The idea of the person who serves is that of occasional service: whereas the slave is a person who is bound to the Lord every moment of life, always serving, regardless of the hour or call or difficulty.

The idea that there are degrees of service is unquestionably in mind. Not every believer serves with the same fervour or commitment. The idea of *degrees of reward* for work is conveyed by our Lord time and again (Lk. 16:10-12).

Mat 10:42 *“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”*

Mat 18:14 *“In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.”*

Luke 22:26 *“But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.”*

John 13:14 *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”*

Eph 6:7 *Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.*

Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

Prov 22:4 *Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honour and life.*

Micah 6:8 *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

4. True greatness was demonstrated by Christ in three supreme acts.
 - a. The act of coming to earth: “The Son of Man *came*.” The incarnation is the Son of God becoming man. Most men look upon mankind as the summit of creation on this earth. But within the span and scope of the universe and the dimension of the spiritual world, and in particular before God, man is nothing — not to an honest and thinking man. He is only as a speck of sand on the beach or a drop of water in the ocean. At most, he lasts only about seventy years *if he can*.

In all reality, for God to become a member of so low a race of beings is unimaginable. It is the most humiliating act possible.

- b. The act of ministering: “[He] came not to be served, but to serve.” Furthermore, He was treated as the lowest of creatures by the men to whom He came. Impossible, yet true! They gave Him no place to lay His head (Mt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58) and, only three years after publicly announcing that He had come to save them, they killed Him. Now note: Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, yet He secured His kingdom by becoming a minister and a slave to all. He did not lord it over men. He ministered to and served men, and because He became the slave to all God has now highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:8).
 - c. The act of giving His life as “a ransom for many.” ■

MATHEW 20:28
RANSOM FOR MANY (LUTRON ANTI POLLON)

“Just as the Son of Man did come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mathew 20:28

A ransom in exchange (anti) for many; a ransom for many; a ransom instead of many.

Ransom is a means of setting loose in the Old Testament. It is the setting loose of a life or the ransom for a life (Exo. 21:30). It is the setting loose, the ransom price, the redemptive price for something, for example...

- it is the price paid for the setting loose or freeing of a slave (Lev. 19:20)
- it is the redemptive price paid for land (Lev. 25:24)
- it is the ransom price paid for a captive (Isa. 45:13)

The Greek word for *ransom* (lutron) is significant. There is no question that the idea of *exchange* is present. Christ gave His life in *exchange*, that is, in the place of or as a substitute for many.

The word is used two other times in the New Testament (Mk. 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6). In 1 Tim. 2:6, the words are “a substitutionary ransom for all” (antilutron huper panton). *Huper* is the preposition for the idea of substitution. It is a substitution on behalf of all. However, note two things.

1. All do not receive the offer. Paul said, “[Christ] gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6). John said, “He is the atoning sacrifice [propitiation], for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2). And He is — potentially. Christ has met the need and provided the ransom price for every man and woman, but everyone has to accept the offer of the ransom in their own behalf. Christ has made provision, but anyone can reject the offer of ransom. And some do. Therefore, Scripture speaks of Christ’s dying “for all” and also “for many.” He died for *all* in that He has made *provision* for all to be saved, but He died for *many* in that only some receive the offer of the ransom.
2. There is the idea of sacrifice in the word ransom. In fact, that is just what *ransom* is. It is the exchange, the sacrifice, the giving up of something for something else. Something is substituted and sacrificed for something else. This is exactly what Christ did for us. He sacrificed and gave Himself up as a ransom for us (Eph. 1:7; 1 Jn. 2:1-2).

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Gal 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

2 Cor 5:15 *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Heb 7:27 *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*

Heb 9:13-14 *The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

Heb 9:25-26 *Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Heb 10:10 *And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Heb 10:12, 14 *But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. (see 1 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:2) □*

LUKE 09: 23 CROSS AND DISCIPLESHIP

*Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." **Luke 09:23***

People in Jesus' day knew what it meant to "take up" a cross. They saw scores of criminals bear the cross to the place where they were to be executed, and they witnessed scores of crucifixions, some even by the side of the roads that led in and out of the cities.

The cross does not mean merely bearing one's particular hardship in life, such as poor health, abuse, unemployment, invalid parents, an unsaved spouse, a wayward child. The cross is always an instrument of death, not just an object to carry or bear. The Christian is to die mentally and actively. He is to deny himself daily. He is to let the mind of Christ, the mind of humbling himself to the point of death, be in him and fill his thoughts every day (Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). He is to put his will, his desires, his wants, his ambitions to death. In their stead, he is to follow Jesus and to do His will all day long. Note this is not negative, passive behaviour. It takes positive, active behaviour to *will*, to *deny self*, to *take up* one's cross, to *follow* Christ. A person has to act, work, get to it, be diligent, consistent, and enduring in order to die to self.

There are several ways the believer dies to self. Romans 6:11-13 spells out the ways as clearly as they can be.

Rom 6:11-13 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. (see Rom. 6:2-10)*

1. The believer reckons or counts himself crucified with Christ.

Rom 6:11a *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin.*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

2. The believer reckons or counts himself dead to sin, but alive to God.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. The believer does not let sin reign in his body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Col 3:5 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

4. The believer does not yield the parts of his body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.

Rom 6:13a *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

5. The believer yields himself to God — as much as those who are alive from the dead are yielded to God.

Rom 6:13b *But rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life.*

Rom 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

6. The believer yields his body members as instruments of righteousness.

Rom 6:13c *And offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Gal 5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

It should be noted that one's hardship or burden can bring a person to the place where the Lord can deal with him. It is then that the hardship becomes the cross and denial of self that Jesus is talking about. With an act of self-denial, the Christian can then count or reckon himself alive to God (Rom. 6:13). He can then follow Jesus. This is an act which can be described as committing all that one is and has to Christ. It is an act that needs to be repeated every day (see Mt. 10:38). □