

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). □