**RECEIVE: Text**

Decisions that Encourage Discipleship

Choosing to intentionally grow into Christlikeness.

“*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” Hosea 4:6*

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**Unit 101 Choosing to leave the place where Jesus finds me.**

*(Luke 9:23a) “if anyone will come after me…”*

**Unit 102 Choosing to Serve Jesus where He Leads me.**

*(Luke 9:23b) “…let him deny himself…”*

**Unit 103 Choosing to Learn from Jesus as He guides me.**

*(Luke 9:23c) “…take up his cross daily…”*

We have looked at the “Heart of Cross-Bearing”, which is our love for Christ—love that is so intense that we are willing to bear suffering and pain—our cross—to please Him; and at the “Mind-set of Cross-Bearing”, which is the mind of Christ in Ephesians 2:5-10 (humility); and at the “Joy of Cross-Bearing”, which is the joy that is set before us...what our Master promises us for being faithful in bearing our cross. Last week we looked at the “Nurture of Cross-Bearing”, which is the nurture we receive from the Holy Spirit and fellow believers as we carry our cross. Today we look at the lingering battle of cross-bearing. It is a life-long battle to continue in our assignments from Christ, and to do so with the “joy of the Lord.”

**103.5 “The Battle of Cross-Bearing”**

**I Peter 4:8-10** *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint.****As each one has received a special gift,*** *employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God*.”

It is in our human nature to become accustomed to our advantages—even to our friends who help sustain us. Our love for Christ and for one another helps us deal with the failures, disappointments, and even the sins of those around us. In the gift of hospitality to our lives, regardless of the intensity or the lack of intensity of that gift in us, there is special help for each of us to share with one another our battles and find help and strength. “Small Groups” have been a notable advantage for those who are serious in following Christ. Nothing succeeds like success! A fellow traveler’s victory in one area often enables us to have strength for victory in other areas. The “Special Gifts” God gives us encourages us and makes us valuable to the Body of Christ. A Doctoral Thesis ought to be written, if it has not already been written, about the “multifaceted grace of God” We all know that we are different, and that God deals with us differently. We should readily accept the grace of God through the creativity and individuality of others.

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**1 Corinthians 12:1** *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.*

\*\*Each one of us has at least one gift

\*\*The gifts are to be used for God’s glory

\*\*Battles are lost when we try to win them in our own strength

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**Possible Spiritual Gifts**

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Not only is it a lingering battle to continue in our assignment that causes us some discomfort, or possibly even pain and even suffering, but it is a continuing battle to use our spiritual gift when it is often misunderstood by others, or even used as an attack on us. I have seen some attacked with judgment about pride when it is really confidence in the Holy Spirit and the gifts He has given. I have more often seen someone be attacked because of jealousy over the success that God gives. Others do not realize it is coming from the Holy Spirit. One of the major ways that the evil one is working among believers is in their ignorance of spiritual gifts in others, and their rejection of the Holy Spirit giving them their spiritual gift or gifts. You cannot be in total control of your own life and under the control of the Holy Spirit too.

**\*\*\*\*\***

**My Father**

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**James 4:5-10** *“Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose, ‘He  jealously desires the Spirit whom He has made to dwell in us?’  But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’**Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God and He will come close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**Be miserable, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom.  Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*

Another battle in cross-bearing is non-awareness of the operation of evil around us, and sometimes the evil one himself. He is not omnipresent as is God, but he does have a third of the angels of heaven that fell with him and are under his control. It is a mistake to think that we are not at war with evil, and that rationalization or compromise will reduce the battle we face. He fights to win. **The words here to cleanse our hands (our actions) and purify our hearts (our spirit) shows the two-fold nature of drawing near to God and having Him draw near to us.**

**Page Three**

**Revelation 12:10-11** *“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down, the one who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of* **(1)** *the blood of the Lamb and* **(2)***because of the word of their testimony, and* **(3)***they did not love their life even when faced with death.”*

We all long for the day when our faith in verse 10 of this chapter becomes sight. But it is a continual battle when it appears that all is going in the wrong direction no matter how hard we pray, sacrifice, or believe. But one of the most significant victories over evil that I have participated in was in the deliverance of a young woman from witchcraft. And this verse 12 of the chapter was critical.

**\*\* The Blood: The Atonement of the Holy Lamb of God**

**\*\* The Book: The Authority of the Holy Word of God**

**\*\* The Blessing: The Anointing of the Holy Spirit of God.**

If you have not heard of or read that story, email me at the address on top of your study sheet and I will be glad to send you that file. I also have a sermon file that I could send you that amplifies those three points of Revelation 12:11.

**Ephesians 6:10-17** *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.**Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* *and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit,* ***which is the word of God****.”*

Why is it that so many Christians do not take this portion of Scripture seriously? I am convinced that many are not much of a threat in the battle against evil, and so they do not personally experience the struggle of the battle. Notice that all the armor that is mentioned here is defensive, except for the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God. A good offense is always more successful than a good defense. We all need to ask, “How can we more powerfully use the sword of the Spirit?” For some of us that may mean more time with the word, more study and memorizing, or other discipleship efforts.

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**II Corinthians 10:4-5** *“…For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ….”*

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Our thought life is a major way the evil one holds us captive. And the opposite is true, relying totally upon thoughts found in Scripture rather than science, psychology, religion, etc. makes all the difference in the world in our battle against evil. I believe that I have sent you the file on Functional Trichotomy. If not, email me at the address on your class sheet and I will send it to you. I Thessalonians 5:23 teaches that people are body, soul, and spirit. It makes all the difference in the world whether our soul (mind, emotion, will) is focused on this world or the next world, on the flesh or on the Spirit.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** *“Two are better than one…. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion…if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.”*

What can be so helpful is to be in a group of followers of Jesus that are like-minded (two is the minimum, six is probably the maximum for effectiveness) Our isolation is a tool of the evil one to devour us—just as a lion devours its prey.

**John 4:34-38** *“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows, and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."*

One of those facets of like-mindedness is to be totally committed to the harvest. We should have noticed that when Jesus first called the fishermen...his goal was to make them fishers of men. You can see that fully developed at the end of Jesus' earthly life as he tells them to go into all the world and make disciples, teaching them to observe all He has commanded. What a life-consuming task for all of us. Fortunately, the task was not given to each person to go and do the whole job themselves, but it was to the group. And so, we draw comfort in our battle, that we are a part of many groups who are spreading the gospel, bringing people into life in Christ, and teaching them what Jesus commanded. We should not be discouraged if in our battle, some of the “fruit” we have sown to be harvested and developed is “reaped” by others instead. It is His Kingdom we are building, not our resume!

**Page Five**

**Hebrews 13:15-21***“Through Him then, let’s continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips praising His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they may do this with joy, not groaning; for this would be unhelpful for you…. Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, that is, Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

1. The Sacrifice of Praise is an important concept here. God sees the cost it is for us when we bear our cross and do it in a spirit of praise to Him.
2. Because we are bearing a cross in our assignment does not exclude us from the task of doing good and sharing.
3. Obeying our leaders and submitting to them may require us to be creative in how we bear our cross when they don’t understand our assignment.
4. Don’t forget to pray for the full equipment of God to do the good things that are in His will for our lives.
5. The final result and target should always have is to be pleasing in His sight (Psalm 19:14.)

Hebrews 13:20-21 was the benediction that I quoted at the end of almost every service during my 23-year pastorate at Whittier College Avenue Church of the Nazarene. May these five things listed above inform our own cross-bearing, and the battles that are incurred, and may we be pleasing in His sight as we try to fight those battles through our obedience to the Holy Spirit, and how He equips us to do God's will in our lives and in our world.

Finally, in this section on cross-bearing, resist the teaching of Positive thinking…

**“The will can achieve…**

**What the mind can conceive.”**

Rather, embrace what I call Positive Believing…

**“The Child of God can receive…**

**“What the Spirit of God helps them believe.”**