

Lesson 31 Matthew 16.24 -28 (28)

Jesus teaches us to take the lighter end of the cross

Jesus made hosts of epic statements

The word "epic" is reflected in the verb for speech **εἶπον** in the Greek New Testament. Jesus often made statements of this sort-which come out of the spiritual warfare in which He was engaged and which He obliged his disciples to undertake. *It's not an easy road I am travelling to heaven but Jesus travels by my side!"*

Jesus epic statement on the cross (Part one)-"Take up your cross"

Samuel Rutherford, who proposed the idea of the rule of the people under God in *Lex Rex* gave us many pithy sayings -among them "ours is the lighter end of the cross". Though our cross may be lighter yet the voluntary commitment of the believer remains. This commitment means that daily we are to "deny self to the point of mortification of our members and to follow His way daily and lifelong." The word for deny in the Greek scriptures is **απαρνέω** meaning "to deny I know"

Paul says "henceforth I know no man after the flesh" 2 Cor 5.16 In other words Jesus is the only one that matters and His business is my business

Jesus epic statement (Part 2)

"He who would save his soul or life in this world will lose it, but who would lay his life down for my sake will discover it. For what is a man advantaged if he should become master of the world (in booty of war) but suffer the loss of his own life?" (as is most likely -even in the very battle in which he conquers the world. Licinius the brother of Constantine vied for world domination and was spared death but expired not long afterwards. Augustine or Octavius grasped the world but in time breathed his last. Man's reach exceeds his grasp. Material possessions are not part of the calculation of lasting profit where the Master is concerned

Jesus epic statement (Part 3)

"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In former days barter was in vogue. Under this method of trading a man gave a friend something he had to offer for a service or commodity that his friend could render or provide. A County Down doctor, Dr Magill, who had a passionate interest in horses would attend on my wife's family for the consideration of hay and farm produce-this is an example from the not too distant past. Jesus asked, "Have we anything of counterbalancing worth?" The obvious answer is, "No we have not!"

Jesus epic statement (Part 4)

"For when the Son of Man (see Daniel 7.13) is ready to come in the glory of His father with His angels He will give each according to their action. This statement *ready to come* entails a judgement for the purposes of reward prior to the coming of Christ in glorious ruling power. He will sttle the affairs of His church before that day

Jesus frank statement about easy discipleship

The Lord adds a statement on high truth, "Verily there are certain who have stood here (or) stood in good order and array who would not wish not taste of death (the verb is aorist subjunctive of "wish") until they would realise their wish to see the Son of God coming in His kingdom." This day which was millennia away from fulfilment as we now understand when Jesus made it was expected without the cross-without the need to enter spiritual warfare. But that is not God's way.

*From paper to practice*

- 1 Have you taken up your cross and do you count "self" nothing for His sake? cf. Galatians 2.20
- 2 What is there that you presently value that you can take to heaven? What things? What friends?
- 3 An Old Spiritual celebrates "the glorious kingdom" Remember there is "no crown without a cross"

Let Christ's enlistment call galvanise us to caring for and reaching others. It's not a bed of roses- or a

cosy Christianity. Jesus taught we are engaged in spiritual warfare.
4 Are you wearing the armour of Ephesians 6 10-18 Begin today-praying as you give attention to being armed and active?