



Devotional Thoughts :: Let Him Take Up His Cross Daily

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Luke 9:23

Of all the passages of the New Testament that we have devitalized and made insipid, few have been more abused than this. Frequently you will hear good people—a mother with a disobedient child, or a comrade whose work bores him—say, lifting eyes to heaven, "What a cross!" They really imagine that because a little nuisance bothers them from time to time they have "taken up their cross" and are "following Him"!

Their crime is that they adapt the gospel to the humdrum of their lives; they drag Jesus down to their level, instead of admitting frankly that he demands too much of them.

One would offend the Master less by spurning his appeal outright than by thus saying to him: "See, I am obeying you! I walk in your steps. I, too, carry my cross!" That is mocking Him.

When the Master said, "Let him take up his cross," he conjured up a precise image: the horrible and supreme humiliation of slaves condemned to death. In Rome the insult with which one lashed a slave was "crucifer," cross-bearer, as we might say "gallows bird." To explain to his disciples what "denying oneself" meant, and how far it should go, Jesus spoke of the worst outrages that could be inflicted on the lowest class of men.

"Denying oneself" means to be ready to descend to the last rung of the ladder, to become the object of general disdain, to die pitifully, shamefully, hearing those around one say: "Good riddance for society!"

That is what "following" the Master would be; that is what "taking up one's cross" would mean, and not our way of seasoning our unshaken lives with a bit of evangelical poetry.

We might as well know it: it is not at all easy to be a Christian.

By Philippe Vernier