

## Core Theology 5 What is my Mission?

So far we have dealt with Believing, the Trinity, the Bible and the Church. Finally we apply this to our personal circumstances. What is God requiring of me? What is my response to Faith? Should belief in God change (or enhance) my life and my attitude to my Self? Piety is respect for the gods (that is, not only Christian) and godliness is the attempt to live in the fear of God. The fear of God is not a compulsion but a choice. It says that I want to come under the power and impact of God. I want to register the impact that God can have on a person. I look for the life force of faith. If my faith is in God then I can look for God force as well as my own force in believing. Faith is a force in both people and God. God is faith-full or full of faith. God has an intention with His own believing. Creation, Redemption and Judgement are the great acts of God. It is God's intention to create, redeem and bring His redeemed creation to His conclusion. The force of creation means that God speaks creation into being. What God intends by force, is creation by speaking. In the image of God, we also create when we speak. So what is our intention when we speak? What are we seeking to create when we speak? Jesus said that the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart (Lk 6:45). 'You are taken by the words of your mouth' (Prov 6:2). Alternatively, 'He who guards his mouth preserves his life' (Prov 13:3). What are you saying/intending? The wonderful power of redemption means that God saves us from the destructive and uncreative power of sin. The depth of our disobedience to God and its ramification for our lives is breath-taking. The judgement on sin is Perdition (total lostness). Redemption is buying us back from the lost world of sin (or is it the sin world of being lost) which was accomplished at Calvary. Redemption is God's blood-soaked access to our reprobate heart (Rom 1:28). God's intention is clear in redemption. The whole creation groans seeking deliverance from the bondage of corruption. The whole creation seeks the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom 8:20-22). God is also bringing the creation to His intended conclusion. Creation is for a purpose. God is bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10) and the redeemed creation shall have God Himself as its temple and the glory of the Lord as its light (Rev 21:22-23).

Once we understand what God is doing, we should determine what part we intend to play in this cosmic drama. What is God sending me to do? See Is 6:1-8. Isaiah overheard what God was doing. A mission (Latin: mitto, I send) is a reason for being and doing. Life can be seen as a mission. Our whole life can be summed up in our mission (with or without God). What is your mission with/without God? Our identity, or who we are and how we define ourselves, always comes from what we think we are doing. Jesus calls us to follow Him. We need to understand what it means to follow Jesus. There are a number of passages that we need to examine and compare.

1. Mtt 16:24-27

**:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.**  
**:25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**  
**:26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

**:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father and with His angels and then He will reward each according to his works.**

2. Mark 8:34-38.

**:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.**

**:35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.**

**:36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?**

**:37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**

**:38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.**

3. Luke 9:24-26.

**:23 Then He said to them all, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**

**:24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.**

**:25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and is himself destroyed or lost?**

**:26 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory and in His Father's and of the holy angels.**

These three synoptic passages are different variations of the same theme which is,

1. To be a follower of Jesus Christ I have to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Jesus. To deny myself means that I do not look into my Self for the answer to my Self. I do not contain the answer to me. I am not to destroy or kill my Self but, something that is much harder, I am to deny (contradict, renounce, disregard) my Self while it continues to make Self demands.

2. There are two crosses in scripture. One cross is the Cross that Jesus Christ died on for the redemption of the world. Only Jesus Christ could make that sacrifice. The other cross is the disciple's cross which the disciple carries to be faithful to Jesus Christ. The cross is the preferred Christian way. The cross is unique to Christianity. The cross is the symbol of Christianity and it stands for redemption, work, identification, suffering, sacrifice, endurance and the core experience of being crucified. Crucifixion requires a dying and a rising to new life. In Rom 6:6 Paul says that our old man was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with so that we may no longer be slaves of sin.

3. If we attempt to save ourselves, which we do all the time, then Jesus is saying that we will lose ourselves. The sure way to get lost is to try to save yourself. Self cannot save Self. If we want to be saved (rescued) then we have to lose ourself for Christ's sake and for the sake of the gospel. That is, we let our life go (abandon) in order that we might find the life of Christ and the life of the gospel. Both Christ and the gospel offer a life. A gospel life is a life lived for the gospel. The gospel is the good news of salvation. A life lived for the gospel will be arguing/presenting the purposes of God in redemption. The gospel has its own force, logic and life. The gospel creates its own destiny for the disciple. The gospel has its own renewed structures for being. The gospel is the beat of an entirely different drum. Will I live the new life the gospel presents?

4. What do I profit if I gain the whole world and lose my own soul? What benefit is it to me to have everything and lose the capacity to enjoy it? That which I own, owns me. I am the prisoner of what I own. (The Christian travels light.) The natural man wants to control his circumstances and secure his future. This is a deception. We are never in control, but we idolise a controlling self. What happens if I am destroyed in the process of gaining what I want? To insist on my own way is to insist on my own destruction. The servant of the gospel leaves control to God and pursues the demands and callings of the gospel. I should stop seeking personal gain and sacrifice my Self for the gospel of Christ if I really want to live and discover life, because life is a gift and not a prize. I do not win/achieve life, God gives it.

5. In the process of gaining what I imagine I need, I sell my soul. I sell my soul in exchange for the securities of the flesh. I am possessed by my attachments. I am bound by my commitments. I am the prisoner of my beliefs. I am seduced by my own opinions. How do I change this? How do I buy back my soul? What can I use to buy back my soul? To whom have I sold it? How do I negotiate? How do I recover a lost innocence? How do I redeem the time (the years the locusts have eaten)? This cannot be done by us anyway. I need the gospel way of repentance, forgiveness and new life.

6. If I am ashamed of what Jesus Christ is doing then He will be ashamed of me when He comes in His glory. There is a final accounting. I need to be true to the words of Christ now. I need to let His Word work in me and accomplish that for which it was sent (Is 55:11).

The importance of these passages may be summarised as, we deny ourselves in order to carry our cross in order to follow Jesus. The goal is to follow Jesus and go where He goes and join our fate to His. The daily walk is a cross walk. There is no Christianity without the Cross.

There is another similar passage in John 12:24-26.

**:24 Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone, but if it dies it produces much fruit.**

**:25 He who loves his life will lose it and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

**:26 If anyone serves Me let him follow Me and where I am there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.**

Instead of using the imagery of the cross, Jesus uses the imagery of a seed. (The kingdom of Heaven is likened to a seed (Mtt 13:1-32)). In order to be productive a seed must die to being a seed. If a seed remains a seed it will produce nothing. A seed is meant to produce something different to a seed out of its own nature and genetic makeup. The Christian way to die is to be crucified. The believer is crucified by identifying with Jesus Christ (Gal 2:20). To be crucified is to have a cross which one carries, to which one is nailed and upon which one offers oneself to God. Cross carrying requires a disregard of Self and its contrary, self-serving intentions.

There are three other passages which warn us about disciple requirements.

Matthew 10:34-39.

**:34 Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.**

**:35 For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.**

**:36 and a man's enemies will be those of his own household (Micah 7:6).**

**:37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**

**:38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**

**:39 He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**

Luke 9:57-62.

**:58 Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.**

**:60 Let the dead bury their dead, but you go and preach the Kingdom of God.**

**:62 No one putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.**

These statements are characteristic of the strong, even unreasonable, demands that Jesus Christ makes on those who follow Him. There is nothing accommodating about Christian discipleship. Luke 14:26-35.

**:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, cannot be my disciple.**

**:27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple.**

**:29-:32 A builder and a king must Count the Cost.**

**:33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.**

**:34-:35 Salt that has lost its savour is good for nothing. It is easy to lose our saltiness (tanginess) as a disciple.**

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ I will have to have a basic separation from all my attachments. My attachments are what are in my heart. They will be the issues of my life (Prov 4:23). Jesus refers to the basic life attachments of parents and family. The term Jesus uses, in Like's account, is 'hate'. Matthew uses the phrase 'love more than'. What I have planted in my heart must be dealt with. What I have clung to in love (1 Kings 11:2) will constitute what I will agonise about. They will ultimately become my fate. That is, the issues of my life will be determined in terms of what I place in my heart (my unconscious). Jesus is warning that I cannot be a follower of His if I have a prior commitment to something (anything) else. My religion is my attempt to protect what I value. I have to value Jesus Christ more than anything else, if I want to be a follower of Him. This involves attachments to family, Self and possessions. These are the three things that Jesus specifies as obstacles to total discipleship. As I enter into a dynamic following and deeper worship of Jesus Christ, I believe my purpose and mission in God will emerge. I need to be purpose oriented. I need to be looking for what I can do. When I find the face of God, I get revelation about life that I can then apply to my life. I can use the Biblical language (metaphors) of cross, sacrifice, altar, disciple, apostle, revelation and calling. Scripture exhibits canons/examples of experience and service for God that I can apply in my circumstances. God is at work in us as we work out our own salvation and our ways of serving (Phil 2:12,13).