

# In His Likeness

*Preached By  
Joseph A Cortes*

Open your Bibles to Mathew chapter 16 verse 21. *“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chiefs priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.”* Verse 23, *”But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan:”*

Jesus knew who was really doing the talking here. Satan was using Peter as a mouthpiece, trying to keep Jesus from going to the cross. Satan knew that the world would benefit by the shedding of Jesus’ precious blood that would provide salvation to a lost world. Satan knew that the time was near for the perfect sacrifice to be made and he was going to use anyone and anything that he had at his disposal to stop Jesus. Peter being close to Jesus allowed himself to be the mouthpiece for Satan. And Jesus responded, *“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto to me:”* Circle that word **offense**. What it means in the original language is any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall. Jesus was telling Peter who was being used by Satan that he was going to be an impediment, a stumbling block to cause the opportunity and occasion for Jesus to stumble. We see it here in verse 23; *“Get thee behind me, Satan:”* Jesus knew where to put the situation and that was behind Him as he kept marching forward to the cross.

Let’s read verse 23 again, *“But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense (an impediment) unto me: for thou sayourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of man”* Stupid and arrogant Peter took Jesus aside to rebuke Him. Now Jesus could have cut him off and disassociated Himself with Peter but He didn’t, why, because He recognized who was doing the speaking and that was Satan. Satan was trying to hinder Christ’s pathway to the cross but he failed. Satan today is still trying to hinder our pathway and journey to the cross. Nevertheless, if we

continually keep in Christ likeness it will produce the same failure also.

So let's read verse 24, *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."* We have to pursue and follow Christ. It has to be your passion. It states there in the beginning of verse 24; *"If any man will come after me,"* you have to pursue Jesus and in that pursuit you have to remember three basic principles. 1) You have to deny yourself, 2) you have to take up your cross and 3) you have to follow Jesus Christ. Now I want to start with the last one first **follow me**. In the Greek **follow me** literally means - a follower in likeness. Write that down in your margin - a follower in likeness. Who's likeness are we speaking of here; Jesus Christ. I have to be a follower in Christ likeness. And if we are going to be a follower in Christ likeness then we are going to have to do what Christ commanded for us to do – which is what he also did.

Now let's go back to the first point, let him deny himself. That is not easily done in today's world. There are so many distractions, so many opportunities to fall off the way of following Jesus Christ and His likeness. There are so many things available in today's world that becomes a distraction. There are so many personal wants and desires. It's not to say that you can't have some of those things, but you have to put those things second in your life with Christ always first. He is always to be the priority and number one concern in your life. To be in His likeness means to be like Him. To do what He did, which was to do the will of the Father.

In this Christian journey that we are on Christ has asked us to do certain things. This is not about salvation. We can't earn our salvation. They tried that in the Old Testament by following the Mosaic Law and they fail over and over. Only Jesus was able to fulfill it. But nevertheless, Jesus knows that after our salvation experience there is a purpose for our lives and that is to be in His likeness. He has to be first and you have to deny anything and everything that will get in the way of following Christ in His likeness. Listen folks, Christ came from glory and had to give up a lot to come and rescue this world from the miserable state it was in. He left glory. He left glory to come and save us, to come and rescue us. He knows all about denying self - He was the captain of it and He is also asking us if we are going to be in His likeness that we have to understand that denying ourselves is the starting point. It starts by denying anything and everything that gets in the way of following Jesus Christ and the purpose and commission He has for our life.

Now let's look at the second part of the instruction that He gives in his particular verse; *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,"* Take up his cross. Not Christ's cross; your cross. It is not your own personal cross of trials or tribulations; it's not your personal cross of hardships. There are plenty of promises in God's word that deals with your trials, afflictions when they surface. But here in this verse to take up your cross means something totally different. Remember we are to be in Christ likeness. (What did Christ do when He went to that cross. He died for the benefit of all mankind. Now we cannot do that. We cannot nail ourselves on a cross for the benefit of others. It sure would not save anyone including us from eternal damnation.)

So what does it mean? It means that you understand what Christ did for you and you want to participate in sharing to others that joy which brings eternal life. It means that you are taking up your cross in the capacity that you were called to do it in. Not all of you are going to be preachers - most of you are not; not all of you are going to be pastors - most of you are not. But you are to participate in the great commission in the place that God has called you to do it in. The majority of you are going to be followers; assisting ministries, churches that get the word out that reaches the lost. That assists in bringing the message of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a dying world, spiritually dying world.

What taking up your cross is referring to in this scripture is for the benefit of others. Ask yourself, have you participated taking up your cross, for the benefit of others today. Now I'm not trying to point fingers at anyone or trying to make anyone feel guilty if they haven't done that. Most of you haven't done that because you have not been taught that taking up your cross is not all about you and what you go through in your own personal experiences of life. Like I said there are plenty of other scriptures that deals with that. What taking up your cross is referring to in this scripture is doing the will of the Father for the benefit of others. And if we are to be in Christ likeness, taking up our cross means we are going to do the same thing that He did. He is expecting us to do it and He will help us to accomplish it. He will help us by putting us in positions and places where we can be a benefit to others with the message of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means that Christ will place most of you in a church or ministry to be a supporting participant to get the message of the gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ out to a dying world.

That is what these verses meant to be in His likeness. If any man will come after me let him deny himself – the first principle, and take up his cross (for the benefit of others) - the second principle, and the third principle follow me. Remember, we have to follow Jesus Christ in His likeness all the way to glory. Amen.

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**Write us at  
Faith Cometh By Hearing  
530 S Lake Ave #701  
Pasadena, CA 91101**