

Jesus the One and Only: Jesus Before My Comfort

**Context: Sent from Antioch, Iconium- persecuted- went to Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe- Zeus (Barn) and Hermes (Paul)**

**Acts 14: 21-22** <sup>21</sup> After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

**New converts. Paul could have left them with any number of truths, but he chose this:**

On our way to God's Eternal Kingdom, we travel a narrow path marked with unavoidable difficulties. God puts these obstacles in our path, not the devil!

In fact, embracing hardship is a core value of real Christianity. There is no life of faith without the death of the Cross.

**Difference in God choosing and me choosing suffering**

**Luke 12:49-50** <sup>49</sup> "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

**Luke 9:23** <sup>23</sup> And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

**Colossians 1:24** <sup>24</sup> Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone  
And all the world go free?  
No, there's a cross for ev'ry one,  
And there's a cross for me.  
The consecrated cross I'll bear  
Till death shall set me free,  
And then go home my crown to wear,  
For there's a crown for me."  
*Hymn, Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone - by Thomas Shepherd*

To follow Jesus and live the abundant life, we must go THROUGH the cross, NOT AROUND IT. Have we embraced this?

Ironically, pursuing the easy life kills me, but enduring God-given difficulty makes me tough and God prolongs my days.

**Context for our crosses- St. Peter and the cross story**

**Amos 6:1a, 4-7** Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who *feel* secure in the mountain of Samaria...<sup>4</sup> Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall, <sup>5</sup> Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves, <sup>6</sup> Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. <sup>7</sup> Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will pass away.

**Matthew 10:38-39** <sup>38</sup> And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

What tempts me to lay down my God-given cross? This is how I am finding my own life - a life without a cross.

Actionless Intellectualism (Always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...)

**Reading about prayer vs taking your cross and praying; studying industry after industry but never building a business**

We hide in the refuge of knowledge because learning is a pleasant diversion from the difficulty of doing.

Rarely is lack of knowledge the problem; our issues arise from lack of discipline/perseverance in the things we DO know.

Non-Confrontationalism: Passivity disguised as graciousness.

**Asking for a raise, making your needs and expectations known in important relationships, speaking up when you have been hurt, seeking out those we have hurt, defending the weak, sharing the gospel, calling out sin in a spirit of love**

We hide in the refuge of relational avoidance because it saves us the pain of working through our problems.

**Ro. 15:1** Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves.

Digital Inoculation of the Mind (DIM): Avoiding the real world to live in a digital one

Children being raised by ipads b/c parents do not want the strain of parenting; grown men failing at life because they can't stop gaming; Hours of social media/internet labeled as "decompression"; even books- Insp. Fiction, kids books  
We hide in the refuge of a fictional world because there we have none of the duties the real world requires of us.

**A-musement- non-thinking**

It simulates the most meaningful aspects of life, stimulates us visually and mentally, and all the while it devastates us, ruining us for life in the real world where God is.

All the hyphenated "comforts" by which we comfort ourselves apart from the Comforter- comfort-eating, comfort-spending, comfort-crisis consumption, comfort-binge-watching, comfort-dreaming, etc.

- **Renewal in the presence of God- Cooking a meal vs. making a pop-tart**

**2 Tim. 2:3,8-13** <sup>3</sup> Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. <sup>10</sup> For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus *and* with *it* eternal glory. <sup>11</sup> It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; <sup>12</sup> If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; <sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Remember Jesus Christ (who overcame death) and endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ! We are competing for the crown that can never fade away.