

BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

ROMANS 12:1-2

Live Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

Following Jesus Christ really means changing our story. Even though we have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) Scriptures states that we all have sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). I can't help but wonder if we were in the garden of Eden walking and talking with God would we not defiantly partake of the same tree because of our overwhelming desire to be like God, knowing both good and evil (Genesis 3:5)? Truthfully we are Adam and Eve's children especially when it comes to our desire to sin! If the Biblical story ended with Eden, humanity would have been left with no hope, just a mere memory of what it was like to know God intimately. As it is there is hope for God has provided the means for us to truly know Him by following His Son Jesus Christ.

For us to truly want to follow Jesus we must first be passionate about what it cost God to have us included in His redemption story. Despite our love for the world (1 John 2:15) and our continued desire to do as the pagans (1 Peter 4:3), God still loved us. The cost of us being His disciple was the death of God's one and only Son. The cost for God was enormous but there are costs for us as well. By letting self die, taking up our crosses and follow Jesus Christ, we as His ambassadors are invited into His redemption story as royal priests (1 Peter 2:9)! While the command to be holy seems impossible (1 Peter 1:16), the Advocate teaches and empowers us to be genuine disciples of Christ.

What it Cost God for an Opportunity to be a Disciple

There are many passages that talk about becoming a disciple of the Lord, Jesus Christ. For the purpose of this sermon we are going to focus on one key passage: **Romans 12:1-2**. If you have spent any time inside of the church, then this passage will be quite familiar to you. Sometimes when passages are learned and repeated frequently they tend to lose some of their deep meaning. Before I show this passage I want you to listen for key words that Paul emphasis such as transformed, sacrifice, conformed, renewal, discernment, mercy and holiness. God has revealed to Paul how a sinner can become holy so please don't turn a deaf ear or let your mind wander away. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and relax. Open your heart and listen as if this is the first time you have ever heard these words.

Paul starts out his passage on discipleship by asking each of us to first remember the mercy that God has shown us. Let's be honest while our minds are capable of knowing and understanding commands, we rarely approach God with a genuine thirst to follow Jesus Christ. For us to truly understand the depths of God's mercy we merely need to look in a mirror, examine ourselves to find out that most time the Lord of our lives is ourselves.

We want to be called His children, ambassadors and priests, and even appear that way inside of the church and maybe even once in a while in the world; but the rest of the time we

keep oscillating back and forth like a pendulum between Satan and God's kingdoms. When Jesus stands at the door of our lives, knocks and wants to spend time with us we instantly turn a **deaf ear** or **run frantically** in the opposite direction. There are times when our life for Christ can be **very cold**. We want to have the benefits of believing in God without obeying any of His commands. While we state that we want to always be drinking from the fountains of living waters, like this **ice cube** our good intentions to be holy merely melt away in a sea of life concerns. The image the world sees of us is a distorted one that has allegiance to neither God nor Satan but ultimately to the greatest God of all SELF!

After having been **betrayed**, overwhelmed with despair, loneliness, sadness and heartbreak; don't you think it is time to get on fire for Christ? Is it not time to stop deceiving ourselves (James 1:22) that we are already holy when in fact we need to clean the inside of the cup (Matthew 23:26) and show this world how much you love Jesus by making our deeds match the holiness of God (Luke 11:28)? It is certainly time but how does one ignite real passion and desire to follow Jesus inside of one's heart strong enough to break the mountains of our stubborn hearts? To be passionate about God we must first understand how depraved we have become and how much mercy God has been showing us sinners every day. To ignite the passion to want to be more like Jesus we must that mercy means the sinner does not receive God's wrath that is deserved but instead His love. Let's look at His wrath for a moment to see how much God is holding back with it comes to punishing us.

In Psalms 145:17 we learn that those who fear the Lord will receive the desires of their hearts but those who are wicked God will punish. Modern day society has made God into a being that only heaps blessings on His children but never displays any wrath towards them. This is very appealing to a modern day generation whose lord is SELF but the concept of a God without discipline is simply not biblical. To understand God's mercy, Paul invites us to remember the magnitude of God's wrath in the past.

Noah: In Genesis 6:11-13 we find that within five chapters of the Bible God goes from saying all of creation was very good to declaring all are evil and corrupt. The people had become so violent and disrespectful of God that He chose to bring a flood and destroy them all! If Noah and his family had not been righteous in God's sight would humanity even exist today? God's wrath is real!

Children of Israel: In fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham to receive the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9), the Lord tells Moses to send men into the land, explore it and get ready to conquer (Numbers 13:1). While they believed the land was as fruitful as God promised, filled with "milk and honey" (13:27), they did not believe they would receive it as promised (13:31-33). The people cried out in complaints against God and stated they wish they were still slaves of Egypt (14:1-4). In response to their blatant sins God stated to Moses He wanted to kill them all and make Moses into a great nation (14:12). Moses begged God to be merciful and the children of Israel were exiled to the desert to wander for 40 years. Only Caleb and Joshua who said God could conquer the land remained alive when the children finally entered the promised land. God's wrath is real!

Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19 is an example of human sin at its very worst! Two angels of the Lord come to Sodom and spoke with Lot. They stated they would spend the night in the square but Lot insisted they come to his home. As soon as night came the men of the town surrounded the house and demanded that Lot send out the angels so that they could have sex with them! The angels told Lot to take his family and leave the town quickly. Lot and his daughters

ran all night and when they were at a safe distance God rained down sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah and killed them all! God's wrath is real!

The point I am trying to make is that God our Sovereign Creator is more than capable and willing to rain down terror and discipline on humanity! In each of these events we can easily imagine ourselves doing the same sins of Noah, Israel or Sodom and Gomorrah; and therefore deserving the same wrath. Grace means not receiving what we deserve. How many sins have you done just today that God has chosen to show you mercy? **Paul is trying to say don't for that the righteous anger of God has been appeased at an incredible cost!**

To be dreadfully honest humanity no matter we tried have always missed the mark of holiness. We deserve God's wrath but we have received mercy at the cost of God's one and only Son. Jesus chose before the beginning of time (Ephesians 1:4) to pay this price. Our Messiah emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7), was born amongst us (Matthew 2:1), and allowed His enemies (Romans 5:10) to judge and execute Him because He did not meet our expectations. Drowning in our own sin we chant over and over again "crucify Him, crucify Him" (Luke 23:21). We who deserve God's righteous wrath have not received death but life. He who did not deserve death because He was sinless (1 Peter 2:22) received death so that we might have life. Paul in Romans 12:1 is saying to us today to remember what it cost Jesus, His very life, to secure our mercy.

Christ's love must compel us. In view of His mercy we should want to become more like Jesus. He who purchased us at a price (1 Corinthians 7:23) now commands us to live good and holy lives (1 Peter 1:16). If we don't keep a view of the wrath of God in our minds that we are not receiving because of Christ's sacrifice, then we simply will never be passionate enough about discipleship that change will ever happen.

What it Costs us to be a Disciple

The journey towards discipleship is one that not only costs God but also costs us as well. Paul uses the phrase "living sacrifice" to let us know that discipleship means making sacrifices for God on a daily basis. In Luke 9:23 Jesus gives three criteria to be His disciple.

Deny Yourself. Going back to Romans 12, verse two begins by stating that to be a living sacrifice we are to no longer conform to the patterns of this world. Ever since the Garden of Eden Satan has been telling us that we, not God, should make our own decisions in a manner that maximizes our own human pleasure. While we know in our hearts that we cannot control the unknown future we still are not willing to surrender it to Jesus who is sovereign (Colossians 1:16-17). While we know in our hearts that our wisdom is foolishness in God's sight (1 Corinthians 1:20) we still chose to live according to the standards of this "ME" world (2 Corinthians 10:2). Paul states in Galatians 2:19 that to be a disciple of Jesus SELF must first die. Our insatiable desire to satisfy our sinful nature must be put on the cross and sacrificed. As His ambassadors we are called to live our lives in accordance with the will of God the Father in heaven. While we still have free will we chose to let it die on the cross and make Jesus the Lord of our lives (Romans 10:9). Remember, Christ lives inside of us and there simply is no room in our hearts for two masters!

Take up Your Cross. If you have ever tried to become more like Jesus you know how hard it is to get SELF to die! You think a cat has nine lives, SELF has life as long as we breath!

Sacrifice of self must be done on a daily basis! Living in a world of gossips, slanders, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful people (Romans 1:30) it is extremely difficult to not become like them. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is radical for the light goes against the darkness this world loves (John 3:19-21). Truthfully, that very same darkness is alluring to even a Christian because it gives us a sense of freedom and great pleasure to our human nature. While we have the right to do anything we want only following the will of God the Father is truly beneficial to us (1 Corinthians 10:23). To take up one's cross first means to let the desires of the sinful nature that rears its ugly head on a daily basis to die over and over again on that cross. The second meaning of taking up one's cross in some respect must mean persecution. To be counter cultural means to invite harsh criticism and persecution onto our heads! By saying YES to Jesus by becoming His disciple means to invite hatred of this world upon ourselves (John 15:18). A world that hated the light intensely enough to put Christ on the cross will not hesitate to persecute His followers. Persecution in North America might not mean death but certainly will mean a loss of friends, promotions and wealth; while inviting intense ridicule upon ourselves. Even though we are no match for our true enemy Satan who prowls like a lion (1 Peter 5:8), we can rest in the assurance that the Holy Spirit is more than capable of protecting us (1 John 4:4). If one is not being persecuted, then it is very unlikely that one is being a true follower of Jesus Christ!

Following Jesus. How do you keep your heart purely devoted to doing the will of God the Father in heaven in spite of living in a world that glorifies sin? After Paul says to not conform to the pattern of this world he goes on and states we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). The battlefield for our souls is truly in the mind. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 Paul states that Christians have the divine power to demolish the strongholds of sin. But even when those strongholds are demolished sin must be replaced with holiness to be true disciples of Christ. In Luke 11, Jesus explains why so many of us have tried to clean the inside of the cup only to have failed and become more like this world than when we started. Jesus says when an impure spirit comes out of a person it looks for a new home. If it can't find one, it often returns with other spirits to re-establish that stronghold of sin in that person's life. If we do not replace the old sinful habits with God's commands to be holy, we will once again be enslaved to sin. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 we are told to write the commands of God on our hearts and to make every opportunity we have to learn and practice His laws. When spirits return to find our souls swept clean of sin and filled with God's commands, they simply cannot return! Being holy is not just about giving up sin in our lives but is also about embracing God's commands that leads to righteousness! This is what Jesus meant when He said follow me.

Our Advocate

The last point that I want to make relates to our fear of crossing the great chasm of where we currently are at to where God wants us to be as His disciples. To give up our love for this world and our freedom to choose our own path in life to embrace God's commands and will, honestly seems impossible. We all tried over and over again to become the disciples Christ would say "good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). John 14:16 states that if we love Jesus Christ we will want to keep His commands because it verifies us as His children. While this might seem like an impossibility to us we must remember that Jesus has sent a helper – the Holy

Spirit – to teach and empower us to live good and holy lives. Becoming holy is not about trying harder it is about surrendering our will to God completely so that the Potter can mold the clay!

Conclusion

Following Jesus Christ really means changing our story. Truthfully we are Adam and Eve's children especially when it comes to our desire to sin! If the Biblical story ended with Eden, humanity would have been left with no hope, just a mere memory of what it was like to know God intimately. As it is there is hope for God has provided the means for us to truly know Him by following His Son Jesus Christ. For us to truly want to follow Jesus we must first be passionate about what it cost God to have us included in His redemption story. Despite our love for the world (1 John 2:15) and our continued desire to do as the pagans (1 Peter 4:3), God still loved us. The cost of us being His disciple was the death of God's one and only Son. The cost for God was enormous but there are costs for us as well. By letting self die, taking up our crosses and follow Jesus Christ, we as His ambassadors are invited into His redemption story as royal priests (1 Peter 2:9)! While the command to be holy seems impossible (1 Peter 1:16), the Advocate teaches and empowers us to be genuine disciples of Christ.