

Things Go Better With Christ

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24

There is a movie of a very brave young woman who lost an arm to a shark while surfing. The story goes into detail about the struggles she went through to come to terms with her new situation. One scene is of her and a youth worker in her church talking about her new life style. The injured teen, with tears in her eyes, asked how her accident could be part of God's plan for her life. The youth worker gave an honest and appropriate answer by saying she did not know.

The movie goes on to demonstrate how the young lady not only survived but in God's grace became a model for others with serious injuries to emulate. The courage she displayed and her submission to God's unusual will for her life has blessed many with similar issues.

Some people have been sold a bill of goods concerning what will happen to us when we repent and believe in Jesus as our Saviour. The popular myth out there is that when someone becomes a Christian their life will suddenly become all joy and

happiness. They are encouraged to believe that Jesus is the great pain pill to remove all our hurts and pain. Jesus is portrayed as a celestial Santa Claus whose sole purpose in existing is to find out what we want in this life and provide it for us.

This sad misrepresentation of what it means to follow Jesus has turned a lot of people off Christianity. It has also caused certain ones who have begun the Christian pilgrimage to stumble badly.

When we are urged to “follow Jesus” in order to have an easier lifestyle we are very mistaken concerning what it is all about. We need to follow Jesus simply because it is the right thing to do. Jesus ought to be served by all of us regardless of any profit we might have from the relationship.

Hopefully my readers are in that class of followers of Jesus who walk with Him just because they know they ought to do so. Any benefits that might come our way because of our allegiance to the Lord are certainly most welcome but are never the

reason for loyalty to Him.

This is the meaning of our verse today. We must come to faith in Christ in a spirit of self denial that goes as far as death to our own ambitions in life. A cross in Jesus' day was an instrument of death, not a burden to carry through life. A cross ended the cross bearer's life, it did not make life a long sentence of torment until death finally came.

So we cannot say that life will most certainly go better with Christ. By Jesus' definition, our life will end. Isaac Watts the first great hymn writer of the modern church put it well when he wrote:

My dear almighty Lord,
My Conqueror and my King,
Thy scepter and Thy sword,
Thy reigning grace I sing:
Thine is the power;
behold I sit
In willing bonds
beneath Thy feet.

Have you come to Jesus to die to yourself in order to live for Him?