

THE RECONCILER

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The teaching 'The Believer's Secret To Joy - Losing our lives to find them' was the subject of one of our recent blogs, since many of our friends and readers do not receive the blog message we are led to send it out again in Newsletter Form to all our friends and supporters.

Many people find it difficult to talk about 'joy' in the middle of the difficulties and trial of this present difficult times. However, we can experience His joy and strength in even impossible situations. The situations we face may be difficult. However, like Mary, we may ask "How can this be?" and we can receive the same answer "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you ...For with God nothing will be impossible."

THE BELIEVERS' SECRET TO JOY - LOSING OUR LIVES TO FIND THEM

"These things I have spoken that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full." (John 15.11)

One of the most misunderstood statements of Jesus, is His call to His followers to lose their lives so that they may find them. *"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. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.' (Mt.16.24, 25)*

Many are fearful of becoming His disciples because they misinterpret His invitation to abandon our lives and throw our lot in with Him as an invitation to a life of misery. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, Jesus invites us to ESCAPE a life of misery and enter into the ABUNDANT LIFE He opens for us through His death and Resurrection. To all who receive the reconciliation He has provided, and change from lives of independence from God to DEPENDENCE upon Him, He offers a life in the care of His heavenly Father. He promises that when we lose our independent lives, and throw our lot in with Him, becoming part of His team, we will enter into a much more joyful and meaningful life than any life we could plan for ourselves.

It Is More Than Dedication

The invitation to lay down our lives to follow Jesus, goes further than dedicating our lives to Him and choosing the way of unselfish love. It includes that, but there is more to it than dedication. This is where many miss it. In urging us "to lose" our lives,

Jesus is not just asking us to be unselfish and dedicated to God, but to completely abandon 'self' as the GOVERNING PRINCIPLE of our lives. He wants to liberate us from the tyranny of the "self", with its endless demands, to a life of partnership with Him. Imagine if the greatest earthly king invited you into partnership with Him in exchange for your meagre self-created and self-centered life. This is exactly what Jesus' invitation is – a challenge to abandon ourselves, deliberately and completely, into the plans and ways He calls us to, and for which He created us.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt 11.27-29)

When we take the yoke of the Lord, we are released from forcing ourselves to perform on the basis of OUR energy. Instead we can draw from the energy of the One to whom we are joined. This frees us from every pressure to invent a personal agenda of self-realization, and connects us to the life for which Our Father created us.

When we are joined to the Lord and draw life only from Him, we discover life in all its fullness. Our lives are no longer ones of self-improvement but of self-replacement. When we lose our lives for His sake, we allow Him to live His perfect life through us, in every circumstance and situation.

The call to take up **our** Cross is not a call to take up Jesus' Cross, or to add to His work. It is simply an invitation to do the things that Father God has assigned for us. Sometimes His calling or the situations we encounter will clash with our expectations, preferences and ambitions but when we yield to God in these situations, we will discover His highest will. The outcome will be **joy** and not frustration. *"Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who **for the joy that was set before** Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Hebrews 12.2)

If anyone follows Jesus, allowing himself to be directly governed by Jesus and His life, he is released from the pressure of self-improvement, self-righteousness, self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-governance and he discovers the real life for which he was created. *"As many as are led by the Spirit these are the sons of God"*.

An Essential Part Of The Good News

The invitation to lay down self is actually an essential part of the GOOD NEWS that is too often neglected. Jesus is saying 'I know you cannot live the life for which you were designed. Let Me live MY LIFE in and through you by My Spirit, by yielding yourself to Me each day and allowing Me to direct your ways, your thoughts and your works. Then I will manifest Myself through you'.

The call to renounce self as the governing principle - far from being a harsh demand - is exactly the opposite! It is an invitation to allow Him to express His perfect way through us. It takes the burden off SELF, to live the life that is impossible for us, and replaces it with the most extraordinary privilege of all - Jesus Himself living and doing the impossible through us.

In Jesus there is no self-righteousness whatsoever. There is no self-anything - there is simply HIM IN US. It is no longer WE living the dedicated unselfish life, but HIM living HIS perfect life in us and through us. When we lay down (and continue to lay down) not only selfishness, self-determination and self-preoccupation, but SELF itself as the governing principle of our lives, we will BEGIN our lives as His disciples.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2.20)

Yes as we take up His 'yoke', continually yielding to Him and letting Him express His actions and reactions through us. We lose our self-engineered and self-driven lives, but we discover His abundant life. We then cease from our works 'for' Him, and enter into the rest of faith where He does His works through us and with us.

On the surface, the call to deny ourselves and lose our independent life seems like a negative, harsh demand. This is only because we have looked at it through the prism of religious performance. In fact, it is a call to rest from self completely and become partners with Him in life - to be joined to Him and led by His Spirit. Jesus did not say: "My yoke is heavy." He said: *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light!"* (Mt 11.30) He does all the heavy lifting - we just join Him in His journey and go along with Him.

God does not expect us to attempt to live the Christ life after we are reconciled to Him, as most Christians believe. He is asking us to cease from ALL self-righteous and self-generated effort to live this humanly impossible life. What He is asking is for us is to receive Him as our new nature and then to yield to Him as He expresses His life through us moment by moment.. Only in this way can HIS life, His nature, His ways and His works be manifest in us.

Four Marks of Taking Up Our Cross & Laying Down Our Lives

1. I have ceased to exist as an independently operating human - my life is Christ's life and His life is my life.
2. I am enabled (not by will power, or self-effort but by the life of Jesus' Spirit in me) to live this life only as I draw my life and ability from Him and not from myself.
3. I cease to have independent goals of my own - I am here to do the will of God each day and in every circumstance. My life and interests are merged with His
4. I am not guided by my own opinions or desires, the expectations, opinions or traditions of others but am directed by the Spirit and Word of God.