

The Padded Cross

Author Unknown

“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’” — Matthew 16:24

“Well, here I am Lord. You said, ‘Take. up your cross,’ and I’m here to do it. It’s not easy you know, this self-denial thing. I mean to go through with it though, yes sir. I’ll bet **YOU** wish more people were willing to be disciples like me. I’ve counted the cost and surrendered my life and . . . it’s not an easy road . . .

“You mind if I look over these crosses? I’d kind of like a new one. I’m not fussing, you understand, but a disciple has to be relevant to the 20th century. I was wondering, are there any that are **vinyl padded**? I’m thinking of attracting others, you see, and if I could show them a more comfortable cross I’m sure I could win a lot more. Got to keep up with the population explosion and all. And I need something durable so I can treasure it always. Oh, is there one that’s sort of flat so it will fit under my coat? We should not be too obvious you know.

“Funny, there doesn’t seem to be much choice here. Just that **coarse, rough wood**. I mean, that could **hurt!** Don’t you have something more distinctive, Lord? I can tell you right now none of my friends are going to be impressed by this shoddy workmanship. They’ll think I’m a nut or something! And my family will be just mortified!

“What’s that? It’s either one of these or forget the whole thing?

But Lord, I **want** to be your disciple! I mean, just being with **YOU** — that’s all that counts; but life has to have a balance too. But you don’t understand — **nobody lives that way today!**

“Who’s going to be attracted by this self-denial bit? I mean I want to, but let’s not overdo it! Start getting radical like this and they will have me to the funny farm . . . know what I mean? I mean being a disciple is challenging and exciting and I want to do it, but I do have some rights, you know! Now let’s see. No blood, ok? I just can’t take blood Lord, . . . **Lord? Now where did He go?**”

Self-denial doesn’t fit very well into our narcissistic society now does it? But then again, it probably never fit it *any* society! The New Age philosophy wants to make us into gods, not into sacrificial servants! But Jesus insists that if we are going to be His disciple, then we **have** to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him!

The logic, I suppose, behind such a command by Jesus is the self-realization that man cannot direct his own steps, or even one step, in life. When we come to understand this, then we will turn over our lives to Jesus — **completely**.

The apostle Paul wrote, “*...the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual*” (1 Cor. 15:46). While he may have been referring to the human body in particular, there is a parallel also in the spiritual realm. We are born into this world, and as material, finite, dependent beings, we worry ourselves with the material. So when we decide to follow Jesus, we are doing that which does not come naturally. It is a choice — of the mind, of the heart, of the will. We are putting the *spiritual* above the *material*, the *unnatural* above the *natural*. It is not easily done. But it must be done. Self must get out of the way before God can do anything fruitful with us.

The “cross” must be borne! We all have one with our name on it. It is up to us to carry it. There are no padded crosses, though there are some **heavily padded** churches out there! But the “have it your way” mentality is not the way of Christ. So determine to get up and “follow” Him!

Wayne Goff

301502