

**The Disciple's Instructions**  
**Matthew 10:38—42**

These verses in Matthew must be understood and interpreted in the context of the soon-to-come Tribulation. They were not written for us in this Age of Grace and therefore cannot be taken as our specific instructions to be followed. This is why Paul tells us to follow his example. It is by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that he can say we should follow him as our pattern and not that of the Disciple's (Philippians 3:17). Jesus was preparing the believing remnant for the Tribulation with warnings and instructions about what to expect and how to deal with the sufferings and persecutions about to come upon them.

Although the Tribulation period was delayed because Israel rejected their Messiah and God brought in this Age of Grace, these instructions given to the Disciples will be important for the believers who will go through the Tribulation after the Rapture of the Church. In other words, God said there would be a Tribulation and it will happen even if it didn't happen when believers of that day thought it should happen according to the prophetic program (2 Peter 4:8—9).

**Take up your cross (verses 38—39)**

How many times have you heard that we need to take up our cross and follow Jesus? Most interpret this as bearing whatever burden I have. Health problems, financial worries, the challenges of life are all viewed as crosses that have to be borne.

To understand what Jesus really meant, we need to look at the context. The idea of bearing your cross occurs in Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27 and also in Mark 10:21 in the KJV. In each case (except Mark 10:21 and Luke 14:27) Christ mentions His death and relates that with the remark that a true follower needs to bear his own cross. This is an obvious reference to a condemned person having to drag his own cross to the place where he will be executed. This was the fate of Christ (John 19:17). Other things related to bearing your cross in Scripture involve family and possessions.

Bearing your cross means to follow Christ to the point of giving up family, possessions or even your life if it pulls you away from following Christ. In the context of the Tribulation, if your family accepts the antichrist as their Messiah and they insist you to do the same, you would need to separate yourself from your family. If material possessions are so important that you would take the mark of the beast so you can buy and sell you need to quit coveting and, as the early Acts believers did (Acts 2:44—45), sell all you have in preparation for the Tribulation. The whole idea is for these Kingdom saints to endure to the end (Matthew 24:13) or abide (John 15:4—6) and not let anything pull them away from following Christ. Those who do not continue in the faith will be cast into the fire and will be burned, as was the fate of Judas.

Part of taking up your cross is the idea of denying yourself. These believers are admonished to daily deny themselves the pleasures of life that take them away from following Christ (Luke 9:23). Obviously this is not a bad thing to do. Our focus should be on Christ and not on the pleasures of this life. Most people will compare these things with what Paul wrote to the church, but a better understanding can often be obtained by contrasting them. In this case there is a big difference between what Jesus is telling these Kingdom believers and what Jesus Christ tells us through the Apostle Paul. We are never told by Paul to bear our cross, deny self, turn away from family members, sell all our possessions or endure to the end because these concepts are part of the Kingdom program to prepare the remnant of believers for the Tribulation and the almost overwhelming satanic influences that will be prevalent during that time.

Instead of dying daily to self Paul says we are already dead. Those of us who have believed in Christ and in His death, burial and resurrection are saved. We are saved when we completely trust Him for our salvation and add nothing more. Those who have done this have already died with Christ (Romans 6:8), have been

buried with Christ (Romans 6:4) and have also been raised with Him (Colossians 2:12). Although this last verse is often made “wet” by our Baptist brothers, water baptism is not in view here and using this verse to that end actually cheapens the true meaning of Christ’s work by making the one baptism of the Holy Spirit into the one baptism by water.

The upshot of all this is that the old nature has no power unless we bring it back to life. As Christians we can choose to live for self or choose to live for the Lord (Romans 6:12—14). We are to consider the old nature as dead and live for the Lord (Colossians 3:5). Since the old nature is dead, we are also dead to the Law with all its ordinances, rules and regulations (Romans 7:4—6). We don’t need to die daily to ourselves because we are already dead. Now we just need to live our lives as if we are truly dead. Instead of focusing on dying to self we are to focus on being a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1—2).

### **Those worthy of the Kingdom** (verses 40—42)

As Christ sends out His Disciples they are speaking on His behalf and therefore whoever accepts them accepts Christ. Those who accept Christ also accept the Father. Christ continues to say that the person who accepts a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward. There were many in Israel who rejected the word of a prophet and even killed the prophets sent by God (like John the Baptist). There were many others who did not listen to the prophet and thus turned their back on God. Those who did listen and heed the prophet would receive the reward of a prophet...the Millennial Kingdom. The same was true for any righteous man.

Christ finishes up His instructions to the Disciples by saying a disciple who gives even a cup of cold water to these little ones will not lose his reward. This can be understood by reading about the reward given to the righteous Gentile who treats Israel well during the Tribulation in Matthew 25. Those who treat the Little Flock with kindness will be blessed. These little ones are the Little Flock of Luke 12:32 who are the righteous remnant of Israel.

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