



Take up your Cross

Message for February 2021 – 39

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
REFORM MOVEMENT
YOUTH DEPARTMENT OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

My dear youth:

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask that his blessings, love, and direction be upon you in abundance.

A work of donation

Many misunderstand the gospel by teaching that those who follow Christ will not have the problems or difficulties faced by those who do not accept Him as their personal Savior. The modern teaching of the “Prosperity Gospel,” widespread in the United States, conveys this concept to its followers: “this gospel focuses primarily on material possessions, physical well-being, and success in this life, which it mostly includes abundant financial resources, good health, clothing, housing, cars, job promotion, business success as well as other life issues (www.lausanne.org).”

This is a wrong view of biblical teaching. It is true that when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, life takes on another meaning. We are blessed in His name and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us, giving us His guidance, His inspiration, His love and even His exhortation, but it does not take away the possibility from us of tasting the gall of life. In fact, Jesus clearly taught that in the world we would have afflictions, but that we should trust the Lord in spite of everything (John 16:33). The emphasis then, is not placed on the prosperity that we will have in the world, but on the help that we will receive from God in every complex situation. For the Christian it is imperative to understand that the highest priority in his life is to seek the glory of God. Other things, that is, the peremptory goods that we need to live, will be added

to the extent that God considers appropriate and according to the case of each (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus presents us with the reality of the Christian life: **“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.

What does it mean to “take up your cross?” In the context of the verse it is explained. Those of us who wish to follow Jesus must “deny ourselves.” It is a renunciation of self, selfishness, by focusing on oneself while forgetting others. If we study the life of our Creator we will see that it is characterized by “giving.” He could have created only for Him and enjoyed together as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; He had every right and did not need to give any explanation to anyone. But God decided to create angels, beings from other worlds, and us...

He gave us life in Eden, He gave us His image and likeness, a home, a perfect world, full of docile animals that made their lives happy. All creation is the work of God and the Creator sustains it with the power of His Word, out of love. The psalmist acknowledges this by saying: **“The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”** Psalm 145:15, 16.

A work of self-denial

At last the Father gave his Son Jesus, who became a man and led a life of total self-denial, setting an example for us in every way and finally humbly took up the cross to die on it. Isn't this a clear and unequivocal display of God's love for each one of us? What more evidence can we ask God to prove that His mighty hand clings to ours and that he does not let us wander through this valley of pain alone?

It is true that we are surrounded by suffering and that sometimes we have to experience it in our own flesh, like the patriarch Job. But it is also completely true that the cross that we have to carry does not exceed our strength, because God sustains us. **“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”** 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Self-denial, humility of heart, submission to the will of God, are attitudes of the soul that can be cultivated with the help of God. The Father and the Son have sent their Holy Spirit to live in us and carry out a work of complete transformation. And thus, with clean eyes and hearts, channels that the Spirit purifies, we will be able to live in that new dimension in which “self” no longer reigns, but Christ lives and rules in us (Galatians 2:20).

Conclusion

Thus, the apostle Paul could affirm: **“I die daily.”** 1 Corinthians 15:31. Dying is the act of cessation of life. When we die, all organic and brain function ceases.

There is not the smallest sign of activity, no energy. The body is decomposing until it falls apart and so we stop being. In a spiritual sense, “to cease to be” is to die to “self,” it is our “self” that is the cause of our ruin and estrangement from God.

As long as the “self” lives, we will not allow the Spirit of God to take possession of our minds, our desires, aspirations, and actions. “Genuine sanctification... is nothing more than dying daily to self and the constant surrender to God’s will.” *My Life Today*, September 1.

Dear youth, feeling that it is my sacred duty and responsibility, I invite you to take up the cross that Christ has placed on your shoulders and to carry it with humility of heart. I know this work is not for you to do alone. You need the help of the Holy Spirit. And the good news is that Christ has given us His Spirit so that everyone who believes in Him is not lost, does not have to be fight in vain, suffering in vain, crying in vain, sinking hopelessly...

All humans suffer and face difficult and even distressing situations, but He who is by our side is more powerful than any problem, higher than any impassable mountain, deeper than the oceans, larger than the universe. Yes, Jesus is everything and He is above everything. He can do everything and governs everything, there is nothing that can resist him. Will we serve our beloved Savior? Will we love Him? God bless you. Amen.

José Vicente Giner
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Youth Department Leader

For reflection:

1. Why do human beings suffer?

2. Is suffering necessary for us?
3. Give reasons for your answer.

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www.uponhighplaces.org