

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

March 8, 2020

“A Rock of Stumbling”

8:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

9:15 ~ First Service

10:45 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

**You must let Stacey know if it is okay to send you a directory invitation*

Resurrection Sunday, April 12, 8:30 Devotion, 9:15-10:15 Brunch, 10:45 Service

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com ~ Hear a sermon at

aletheiachristianfellowship.podomatic.com

Like us on Facebook ([aletheiachristianfellowship](https://www.facebook.com/aletheiachristianfellowship))

Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, secretary@myaletheia.com, kids@myaletheia.com

MATTHEW 16:21-23 ~ ²¹NASB From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²²Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” ²³But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

“From that time,” occurs only one other time (Matthew 4:17, where Jesus began His ministry). This is a _____ phase.

Jesus said that “He must go to Jerusalem.” The word “Must,” is δέῃ (dē). It means that, “It is necessary.” Biblically, it has to do with God’s _____.

Jesus predicted that He would “Suffer many things.” Both Mark (8:31) and Luke (9:22),
 _____ “And be rejected.”

It is “The elders and chief priests and scribes.” The grammar tells us Jesus meant the whole _____ of Jewish Leaders, i.e. the Sanhedrin (συνέδριον [sü-něd-řě-ŏn]).

Jesus put it this way to make it clear, that the Council is made up of
 _____.

The, “And be killed,” means that while the individuals in the Council will be directly responsible for Jesus’ “Suffering” and will ultimately be responsible for His murder, they will be _____ participants in the actual execution.

The “Raised” part, is directly tied to the “Killed” part, and while it can take on a broader meaning, it primarily points to the _____ .

“The third day,” ties it back to the “Sign of Jonah.” Jesus has already used that
 _____ in this Gospel (Matthew 12:40&16:4).

The “Three days and three nights,” was a common saying that indicated the heroic journey down into the Netherworld and back to the land of the _____ victorious.

“Peter took Him aside,” does not mean he maneuvered Jesus away from the others for a more _____ conversation. He basically grabbed Him by His shoulders... Like a parent about to chastise a child.

Undoubtedly, the whole group _____. Peter “Rebuked” Jesus. This is ἐπιτιμάω (ě-pē-tē-mä-ō). Elsewhere Jesus “Rebuked” the storm, demons and sickness. (Matthew 8:26, 17:18, Luke 4:39, etc.).

Then Peter said, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” While this _____ mean “You’re absolutely wrong, Lord. God will never allow such a thing to happen to You.” It’s more like, “Look Lord, You need to buck up and get on Your knees and repent of Your lack of faith!”

“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” Jesus wasn’t calling Peter Satan. The second part _____ the first part – that’s the way Greek phrasing works.

Peter was reacting to what Jesus had been telling them from a human point-of-view. I’m certain that He was certain, that His response was straight from _____.

Jesus basically said, “No, it’s just the opposite of what you think Peter. “I know My Father, and I know My mission, and you, for all your good _____, are saying precisely what Satan Himself said to Me, in order to tempt Me away from both.”

When Satan had finished trying to tempt Jesus, Jesus told him ὑπάγω Σατανᾶς (hü-pä-gō Sä-tä-näs). It’s essentially the same here.

What is a “Stumbling block”? Romans 9:32&33 & I Peter 2:8, quote Isaiah. Jesus is the “Stone of stumbling and the rock of offense,” because people are _____ by their flesh to pursue what they desire, instead of what God actually provided. Jesus turned it around. He was saying that the Rock Peter, upon whom Jesus would build His church, was presently acting as the Rock that could tempt Jesus to stumble and fall. It is πέτρα σκανδάλον, (pě-třä skän-dä-lön).

“God’s ways are not our ways.” It is often impossible to _____ God’s Will with human reason. There are two related problems for us.

We don’t _____ God and we don’t _____ God.

Pray that He will reveal Himself to you and that you will know His Will, because you have come to know His character. That requires spending time with God – there are no shortcuts to that.

In the meantime, be especially cautious when speaking for God.

MATTHEW 16:24&25 ~ ²⁴NASB Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Jesus basically said to His Disciples, not only was Peter wrong about what God has in store for Me, you are all wrong about what He has in store for you... And _____ of those who will come after you.

It turns out that Christianity isn’t just about a “Suffering Savior,” it’s about a Suffering Church.

The “Take up your cross,” means that you _____, in order to be Jesus’ disciple, forfeit this present physical life (Philippians 3:8).

This is put into the context of _____. Nothing can have a greater _____ than Jesus in your life – nothing.

Key: new, purpose, add, group, individuals, passive, Resurrection, twice, living, private, stopped, can, clarifies, God, intentions, tempted, reconcile, know, trust, all, must, priority, priority

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 16d ~ 030920

Welcome Friends

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

Two weeks ago, we saw where Jesus elicited a statement of faith from His Disciples as Peter boldly proclaimed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus then, just as boldly pronounced that He would build His church upon Peter.



(Baalbek Lebanon) We discussed how Peter wouldn't be the only foundation stone of the church and that all the foundation stones would-be set-in place upon the bedrock of Jesus.

Further, we saw that the completed foundation of the church is the Bible. The teaching of Jesus through those inspired foundation stones.

We ended with Jesus sternly warning – I mean seriously, earnestly commanding His guys to tell no one about that. Why? Because being the “Christ, the Son of the Living God,” wasn't what people thought it

was and the more people who knew, the harder it would be, to be the only casualty.



Remember the “Feeding of the 5,000”? The mob wanted to make Jesus their king by force (John 6:15). We don’t have to imagine the cost of a Jewish revolution, because it happened 40 years later and by conservative estimates well over 1 million Jews were killed and over 100,000 were enslaved and the Great Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.



Matthew 16:21 ~ 21NASB From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. 22Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” 23But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

We start with “From that time.” It is a phrasing that occurs only one other time in the entire Bible. The exact words were used right after John the Baptist was

arrested in Matthew 4:17, 17NASB From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

We now enter a whole new section of the Gospel. From here on the mission is changed. The Christ must be the Lamb before He's the Lion.

The time for active ministry to the Jewish people was replaced with an active ministry to all people as the One and Only Savior, who saves, by paying the debt no one else can pay.

And that's what Jesus began to show His Disciples plainly. Very specifically, it would happen in Jerusalem and it would be at the hands of the Jewish Leaders. It would result in His brutal assassination.

Let's examine it a little closer. Jesus said that “He must go to Jerusalem.” The word “Must,” is δεῖ (dē). It means that, “It is necessary.” Biblically, it is more than “Must”; it is like, God has decreed that this is His Will and purpose and I am compelled to act in accordingly.

Here, Jesus predicted that He would “Suffer many things.” Both Mark and Luke, in their parallel accounts add “And be rejected.” Matthew left that out because it

is implied and without it, he makes a far starker and abrupt connection to those who will cause Jesus to suffer.

It is “The elders and chief priests and scribes.” The grammar tells us what Jesus meant was the whole grouping of Jewish Leaders and so it is another way of saying the Jewish High Council, or Sanhedrin, which incidentally, just like Synagogue, comes from Greek, not Hebrew. It is συνέδριον (sü-něd-řē-ŏn), meaning the “Place of those who sit together,” and so the council.

But the way we choose to say a thing – the word choices we make has a purpose – it adds nuance. IF Jesus had said it that way, it then becomes an entity and no individual is directly implicated. Jesus intended to make it clear that even though it will be the Council that will cause His “Suffering,” that council is made up of individuals and each of those individual members “The elders and chief priests and scribes,” will be held accountable for their part.

We see the same thing in Washington. A recent headline in the National Review stated, “Senate Rejects 20-week Abortion Ban.” While technically true,

53 of the 100 Senators voted for the ban. Who are the 47 who rejected it – who killed the Bill? All those individual senators made an individual choice and while they can hide behind the group to some extent now, God will hold each one personally responsible.

The, “And be killed,” is quite amazing. It means that while the individuals in the Council will be directly responsible for Jesus’ “Suffering” and will ultimately be responsible for His murder, they will be passive participants in the actual execution.

Which of course, turned out to be precisely true. The Council got Rome to do its dirty work.

When Peter heard this, just like when we hear it today, the focus goes to suffering and death. Jesus didn’t end with that. He said that Almighty God would vindicate Him fully by raising Him back to life.

The “Raised” part, is directly tied to the “Killed” part, and while it can take on a broader meaning, it primarily points to the Resurrection.

That goes back to the “Sign of Jonah.” Jesus has already used that twice in this Gospel. In Matthew

12:40, Jesus said, 40NASB“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”



We talked about it extensively then. You may remember, that the “Three days and three nights,” not only, did not literally mean three full days and three full nights, as in a 72-hour period of time, it didn’t mean a measure of time at all. It was a common saying that indicated the heroic journey down into the Netherworld, Sheol, the place of the dead, Hades, and then, through ingenuity and with the help of the gods, or the God, to return to the land of the living victorious... But unlike

the mythological Greek characters Theseus, Heracles and depicted here, Orpheus going down to retrieve Eurydice, and also unlike the Historic figure Jonah himself, Jesus would actually defeat death once and for all, creating the opportunity for anyone willing to accept Him fully to live forever.



Here, Jesus again pointed out, that while He would be rejected and suffer and die, that would only be the beginning of the story.



Peter, like most people, missed that part. The phrase “Peter took Him aside,” does not mean what we assume. Everyone translates that way because that’s the technical meaning, but it was a colloquial phrase that meant more like took Him in hand, which is the way the Message Bible has it. My only point is that Peter didn’t maneuver Jesus away from the others for a more private conversation, He basically stepped in front of Him, face-to-face, and grabbed His shoulders... Like a parent about to chastise a child.

Undoubtedly the whole group stopped – now we have a very public scene – everyone is keenly aware of what’s happening. What did Peter do then? He

rebuked Jesus. It is ἐπιτιμάω (ě-pē-tē-mä-ō). A word describing Jesus in Matthew 8:26b, 26bNASB “He got up and REBUKED the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.” And in, Matthew 17:18, 18NASB “Jesus REBUKED him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.” And for fun, Luke 4:38b&39, 38bNASB “Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. 39And standing over her, He REBUKED the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.”

This is what Peter is doing to Jesus. What’s more shocking is what Peter actually said in his scathing rebuke, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.”

This can have the meaning “You’re absolutely wrong, Lord. God will never allow such a thing to happen to You.” That’s the gentlest and nicest way to interpret the words. The other way to see it and probably at least partially intended is, “Look Lord, What’s wrong with You? Get ahold of Yourself, buck up. You need to get on Your knees and repent of Your unbelief. Ask for forgiveness for your lack of faith. Of course, God will

protect You, You must trust Him.” Can you say “Presumptuous”?



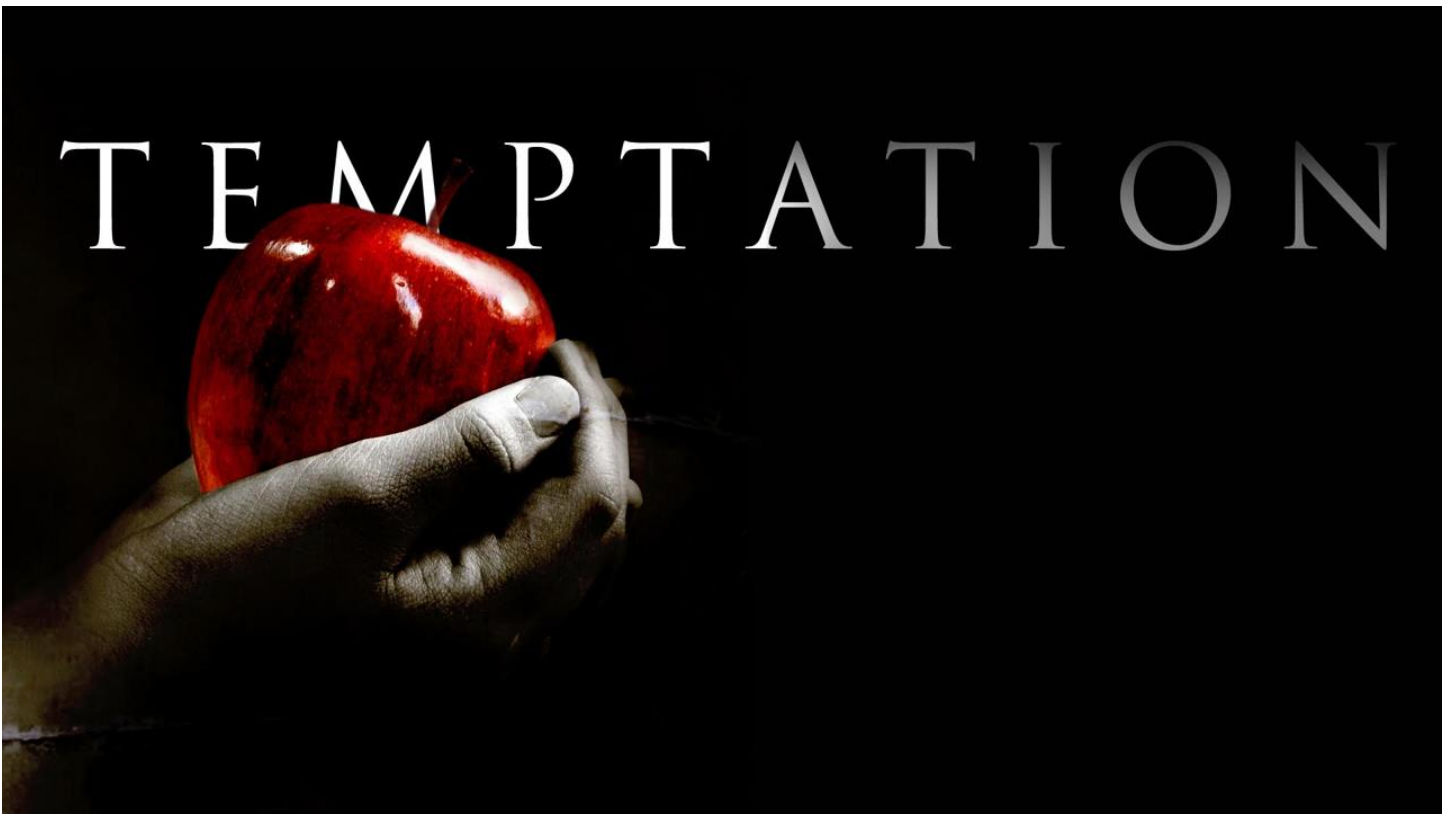
At this point, Mark gives us a detail that Matthew leaves out. Mark 8:33, tells us at that moment Jesus turned around and saw His disciples. It's a nice piece of information to have – it helps us see the scene. Peter has stopped Jesus, grabbed Him by both shoulders and chastised Him like a child while all the rest of the Apostles stood around them gaping. Jesus saw the effect of Peter's actions on the group.

This required decisive action. Why did Matthew leave it out? Once again, the extra detail interrupts the flow – it

would minimize the severity of Jesus' response. Mark tried to overcome that by using the word "Rebuke" again. Matthew does it by leaving out the detail. Either way, Jesus' response is fierce.

It would be impossible to shut someone down more harshly and definitively, than Jesus did without losing your temper.

By every indication, Peter was animated, but Jesus was stoic – He didn't yell at Peter, or curse him, or call him names, despite what people assume. Jesus' response was measured and perfect.



“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” Jesus wasn’t calling Peter Satan. Jesus personally knew Satan, they had met, He knows Peter isn’t that guy. The second part clarifies the first part – that’s the way Greek phrasing works.

Peter was reacting to what Jesus had been telling them from a human point-of-view. From a fleshly perspective, from an earthly foundation... Now, here’s what we’ve got to see my friends... I’m certain that He was certain, that His response was straight from God. In perfect accord with the Throne in Heaven. Peter was

sure that He was doing God's work in rebuking Jesus for His lack of trust.

Please see how we constantly do the same thing. How often do we think with our petty little human brain and assume it is a decree from the Burning Bush?

Man, we need to be cautious about putting our words into God's mouth. Just the idea of it should strike fear in your heart. Anyway, that's what Peter did, and Jesus essentially said, "No, it's just the opposite of what you think Peter. Naturally, you would think that God, My own Father, would protect Me from evil men, but you're the one who's wrong."

"I know My Father, and I know My mission, and you, for all your good intentions, are saying precisely what Satan Himself said to Me in order to tempt Me away before."

When Satan was trying to tempt Jesus back in chapter 4, Jesus told him ὑπάγω Σατανᾶς (hü-pä-gō Sä-tä-näs) "Go away from Me Satan." It's essentially the same here. It hearkens back to the "Temptation" and Jesus' final response to the "Tempter."



And that's what it is at the end of the day. The Tempter tells us exactly what we want to hear. It wouldn't be much of a temptation otherwise.

Jesus didn't want to go to Jerusalem, be rejected, suffer greatly and die horribly. To suggest to Him that it was all completely unnecessary and even counter to God's actual wishes presented a potential temptation – it was “A stumbling block to Him.”



What is a “Stumbling block”? Well for that we go the Rabbi Saul, better known as the Apostle Paul. In Romans 9:32&33, he quoted Isaiah chapter 8, as 32NASB They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”

Peter ended up fully grasping the concept as he later wrote in I Peter 2:8, 8NASB “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word.”.

Jesus is the “Stone of stumbling and the rock of offense.” How is He so? It is because people are

tempted by their flesh to pursue what they desire, instead of what God actually provides. Those who are disobedient to the Word, whether Jesus Himself, or the written Word that reveals Him, will stumble and fall.

Jesus turned it around. He was saying that the Rock Peter, upon whom Jesus would build His church, was presently acting as the Rock that could cause Jesus Himself to stumble and fall.

Jesus had that Isaiah passage and His declaration about building His church on Peter in mind when He said this. The “Stone of stumbling and rock of offense is the tripping hazard that derails people from the finish line. Peter is Πέτρος (pě-třös), and this is πέτρα σκανδάλον, (pě-třä skän-dä-lön).



The reason that Peter was unknowingly supporting Satan's cause and was therefore acting as an obstacle to Jesus and His mission, was because Peter was looking at things with his human eyes, thinking about them with his human mind, and reacting to them with his human heart.

"God's ways are not our ways." It is often impossible to reconcile God's Will with human reason. There are two related problems for us.

We don't know God and we don't trust God. Those interrelated elements boil down to one thing... There is a disconnect between God's ways and our ways.

I could go into a whole detailed explanation that honestly wouldn't work very well in this setting, so as a cursory overview, what I'm saying is we have an extremely difficult time comprehending God.

Our human understanding of anything is tremendously dependent upon what we already know through our experiences in life. We have a hard time grasping things with which we have no experience... Things like infinity and eternity and sovereignty and perfection.

We are constantly trying to define God in our own mind – which is to say we are always trying to put Him in a box. God is this, but not that. The entire debate over God's sovereignty and human free will is precisely that. We can pretend whatever we want to pretend, but at the end of the day, it is our attempt to get a handle on God.

When we accept a bigger view of God – when we admit our feeble brains cannot corral God – only then are we on the path to knowing the True Him – or at least the Truer Him.

God is not some great and ancient, super wise and powerful alien, as in the Mormon religion. He's not some big fluffy pushover, as many morally liberal Christians believe. He's not some cosmic genie, as so many Pentecostals think. He's not or some egotistic manipulator Who requires our love as many others suppose.



God is so far beyond anything we can think or imagine it's impossible to put into words. As a start, He is forever. Without beginning, middle or ending – pure eternal existence. Simply by speaking the Words of His mouth, formed by His Mind and propelled by His Breath... A miniscule bit of His boundless energy was

transformed into a universe so vast we have no idea where it ends. We have approximately 250 billion suns and over 100 billion planets, just in our little ole Milky Way Galaxy. There are over 100 billion more galaxies like ours in just the observable Universe.

Einstein is probably most famous for his $E=MC^2$, equation. An equation, by definition equates and that's the primary beauty of Einstein's equation. From it we recognize that energy and mass, or matter, in other words, the stuff, all the stuff there is, and pure energy are interchangeable. They are different forms of the same thing.



How much energy does mass contain? If you took all the atomic energy stored in dime it would be equivalent to a 20 Kiloton Atomic explosion. A better question for us is the reverse. How much energy is required to produce matter? Well, it's the same. The energy produced by 40 million pounds of dynamite, TNT, is required to create a dime out of thin air.

Where did the universe come from – how did it all begin? The Bible is the only document on earth that tells the story correctly. God spoke.

Imagine the power required to simply speak the universe into existence? Imagine the intelligence,

wisdom, knowledge, necessary to do it in such a way that everything works.



Imagine the care and the concern the effort and the dedication required to provide such a display to the pinnacle and point of His creative efforts... You and me.

We complain about all manner of things, but consider the intricate perfection that allows anything to function at all.

This is the God we question and rebuke. Because we don't know God, we don't trust Him enough to defer to

His ways – instead we work diligently to foist our ways on the world and then have the audacity to imply that it is God's Will.

Open your perspective and see a bit more of God each day. Pray that He will reveal Himself to you more accurately and that you will know His Will, because you have come to know His character. That requires spending time with God – there are no shortcuts to that.

In the meantime, in every tiny choice you make, ask yourself is that in keeping with the God I know – is that what Jesus would do in this situation? Be especially cautious when speaking for God. Make certain you are not doing what Peter did. You never want to say, what God will and will not forbid, unless you're sure it's true.



We have such a massive advantage over Peter. We have the entire Bible at our disposal 24 hours a day along with all kinds of aids in understanding it. We have the church and all the Godly counsel, encouragement and support it provides, and of course the greatest advantage, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach and guide, to correct and mature.



Matthew 16:24&25 ~ 24NASB Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. 25“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Jesus basically said to His Disciples, not only was Peter wrong about what God has in store for Me, you are all wrong about what He has in store for you and all of those who will come after you.

It turns out that Christianity isn't just about a “Suffering Savior,” it's about a Suffering Church. Tertullian writing

to Caesar in 197 from Carthage famously stated, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Every one of the Apostles suffered terribly for the Faith and all but John were brutally murdered for it.

We think Christianity is something we add to life... We're trying to live happy, healthy, safe lives and we add Jesus to the mix because it works for us – in one way or another – it works for us.

There is tremendous upside and little or no downside. The only real negative for most Western Christians is giving up many of their Sunday mornings and a miniscule amount of their wealth and income to the church.

We get a hangnail and we seek God's intervention and if it doesn't come quickly, we begin to question His goodness.

That's a far different picture than the one Jesus painted.

The “Take up your cross,” bit is misunderstood. It shouldn't be, because the meaning is as plain as “God

said.” In that time, the lowest of the lowest, who were condemned to the cruelest of executions, were required to carry their own instrument of death to the place of crucifixion.

There can be no other meaning to Jesus’ words here... He was saying, you must, in order to be My disciple, forfeit this present physical life. All your hopes and dreams, all your comfort and wealth. everything you are, must be freely, even joyfully relinquished. The Apostle Paul understood. Philippians 3:8, 8NASB More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”

If you try to save your present physical life, you will forfeit your future eternal life.

This is put into the context of priority. Nothing can have a greater priority than Jesus in your life – nothing. Not your spouse, your children, your parents, your siblings, your friends, your hobbies, your job, your bank account, your assets, your toys, nothing, my friends, nothing.

Many things, especially people can have tremendous value, but when compared to following Jesus with full integrity they are rubbish... Rubbish in comparison.

If the people you encounter regularly, your family, your friends, your coworkers, your acquaintances of all stripes, if these people don't know that your first and foremost devotion is to your Lord, you are doing something wrong.

Many Christians over the last 20 centuries have been given a choice to reject Christ, or suffer some horrendous alternative. What would you do?