

#5 AN AUDIBLE WORD.....

After a time of fasting and intercession I awoke one morning to hear a voice speaking. It was audible to me, whether anyone else would have heard it I know not. At times God opens our ears to hear more clearly what He is saying. It was and is rare for God to speak to me in an audible voice outside of dreams. Sometimes we are seeking God for one thing, and He is desiring to tell us what is on His mind.

That morning as I am lying in bed pondering several matters, these words are spoken to me, "Take up your cross and follow Me." Without thinking I answer the voice and say, "Lord! I know that!"

We often think we know much more than we do. This command---to take up the cross---is a basic foundational truth of our faith. I proceeded to inform the Lord that I had read the Word for at least two hours a day for the last several years and was well acquainted with that elementary statement. Little do we realize that we still often know only in part and sometimes at much lower levels than we think. He was soon to cause me to go deeper into that cross-life, and then I would understand what death and dying to self really meant.

Now let me state here so there will be no misunderstanding as to what our cross is. Notice that Jesus said to take up your cross, not His. I used to think our crosses were problems or burdens which we had to carry because we were unable to be free of them. Let us be very clear, your cross or crosses are not just your burdens. You may think your cross is your mother-in-law, your infirmities or your sickness. They may enter in at times to try you, but your cross and my cross are really very simple. It is this: when your will crosses God's will then you have your cross! What a revelation that was to me. When my desires and plans conflict with what God's will and Word say then I have a choice: to die to my will and take up His, or to refuse His will and lay down my cross and do as I please.

Romans 8:28 is an often used but misunderstood Scripture given as a pacifier for our problems:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (KJV).

We do not dare claim and use that verse for ourselves if we are not following the revealed will of God. That Scripture does not apply if you and I live as we please and do not submit to the daily lordship of Christ. Notice it says “called according to his purpose”, not ours! So much in our lives will not work for our good nor will it advance our spiritual walk. We must confess and repent of known sins and trust in His grace to remove them; then He can and will cause all things to work for our good and for His purposes. Our cross may be anything that hinders our putting God and His will first in our lives. It could be even good things like family, job, everyday cares that in themselves are neither good nor evil. If we put these things before God's will, however, they become idols and evil!

Jesus had to take up His cross and so will we. Remember in the garden, when He was sorely tried by the prince of darkness, He asked God to find a way other than the cross if it were possible. The Father informed Him that there was no other way to redeem mankind, and Jesus replied with these great and noble words, “Nevertheless, Thy will be done.” We may have desires and opinions that are not wrong, but we must submit them to God. If they are in conflict with His revealed Word or will, then we too must say, “Nevertheless, Thy will be done.”