

Jesus told his disciples that he must first suffer rejection, be crucified, and then rise again on the third day. What He was saying to them was that there could be no victory and no glory without the cross. When Jesus spoke to His disciples about his suffering and death on the cross He caused them anxiety and great sorrow, they also had trouble believing, and understanding what He said. Peter, who was often the first to react to whatever Jesus had to say, wanted to make sure Jesus was protected from any threat or harm. That is why he disliked the very thought of Jesus having to face rejection, condemnation, and crucifixion.

Why did Jesus use the word Satan when he addressed Peter? If we recall, when Jesus went out into the wilderness to prepare for his public ministry, Satan came to tempt Him to follow a different path than the one chosen by His Father in heaven. Now Jesus recognizes in Peter's response another temptation to seek a different and less costly path for accomplishing his mission other than the way of the cross. The word Satan literally means adversary, or one who stands in opposition. Jesus reminds Peter that his role is not to be an adversary but a disciple - one who stands behind his Master and follows with trust and obedience.

Jesus knew that the cross was the only way He could ransom us from slavery to sin with the price of His blood which was shed for our freedom. Through His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus defeated Satan who held us in bondage to sin and condemnation. And Jesus defeated the power of death and overcame the grave through his resurrection. Through His obedience to His heavenly Father's will, Jesus reversed the curse of Adam's disobedience. His death on the cross won pardon for the guilty, freedom for the oppressed, healing for the afflicted, and new life for those condemned to death. His death gives us our freedom to live as the adopted sons and daughters of our merciful Father in heaven.

Jesus told His disciples that they, too, must be willing to lay down their lives in order to gain a new and everlasting life with their Father in His kingdom. There's a certain paradox in God's economy. We lose what we gain, and we gain what we lose. When we try to run our life our own way, we end up losing it to futility. There is an old Jewish saying, "We plan, God laughs." Only God can free us from our ignorant and sinful ways. When we surrender our lives to God, He gives us new life in His Spirit and the pledge of eternal life. God wants us to be spiritually fit and ready to do His will at all times.

When our body is very weak or ill, we make every effort to nurse it back to health. Shouldn't we give just as much effort and attention to the spiritual health of our hearts and minds?

What would we give to God in exchange for freedom and eternal life? Are we ready to part with anything that might keep us from following the Jesus and His perfect plan for our lives? Jesus poses these questions to challenge our assumptions about what is most profitable and worthwhile in life. In every decision of life we are making ourselves a certain kind of person. It is possible that some can gain all the things they have set their heart on, only to wake up suddenly and discover that they missed the most important thing of all. Of what value are material things if they don't help us gain what truly lasts for eternity. Neither money nor possessions can buy heaven, mend a broken heart, or cheer a lonely person.

A disciple gladly gives up all that he or she has in exchange for an unending life of joy and happiness with God. God gives without measure. The joy that He offers no sadness or loss can diminish. The cross of Jesus Christ leads to victory and freedom from sin and death.

What is the cross which Jesus Christ commands us to take up each day? When our will crosses with his will, then his will must be done. Are we ready to lose all for Jesus in order to gain all with Jesus?