

The Call of the Cross

Matthew 16:21-27 | Nic Gilmour | 13th April, AD2025

1. Context:

- a. Biblical theology: Conflict with the Pharisees (demands, rebukes). Narrative Vv13-20 “who do people say the Son of Man is?” Peter’s amazing affirmation “on this rock [confession/truth] I will build My church...”.
- b. Systematic Theology: Christology > Soteriology > Atonement theory.
- c. “The biblical doctrine of the atonement may be aptly compared to a multifaceted jewel, each facet contributing to the beauty of the whole gem. The various facets of a gem are transparent to and refracted in one another, thereby increasing the brilliance and beauty of the whole.” (William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ*)
 - i. For a primer see Steven Morrison’s ‘Seven Theories of the Atonement’: <https://www.sdmorrison.org/7-theories-of-the-atonement-summarized/>
 - ii. For a historical overview, Thomas Nettles ‘History & Theories of Atonement’: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/history-theories-atonement/>
- a. *Christus exemplar*: the claim of the cross on our lives - living the cruciform life, obedience triumphs over suffering. *Christianos* – first used in Antioch around AD45. See Acts 11:26. *Christianos* indicating ‘belonging to’ or a ‘follower of.’ (*Strongs Lexicon*, on www.biblehub.com)
- b. “Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

2. V21 “From that time on...”

- a. Inflection point – conclusion of Jesus ministry in Galilee (cf 4:17); so begins His journey to Jerusalem to ultimately face the cross.
- b. Jesus is clear – this was the first of four times See 17:22-23, 20:17-19, 26:2 (Cf some scholars who say Jesus was unaware of His imminent suffering)

3. V21 “Jesus began to explain [show ESV] ...that He *must* be killed”

- a. “Jerusalem...elders...chief priests...teachers of the law” – His condemnation & death would be public and officially sanctioned by the systems of this world.
- b. “killed” Don’t count as cheap Jesus willing sacrifice (Phil 3:8)

4. V22 “Peter...began to rebuke Him”

- a. Jarring in historical context – indicative a strong aversion to the thought that Messiah would suffer (cf Ps 22, Is 53, Dan 9:26-27, Zech12:10, 13:7; and see Michael Wilkins, ‘The Gospel According to Matthew’ in *ESVSB* at 1856)
- b. Have mates who’ll hold your hands to the fire (Prov 27:6)

5. V23 ““Get behind me satan!...”” – heaviest words ever spoken to a person. Or words spoken to a person behind the person?

- a. “satanas” is a Chaldee loan word from Hebrew denoting ‘accuser’ or ‘adversary’. In the NT it refers to the very person of the devil.
- b. Abruptness of the cliff is worse than the denigration!
- c. The ‘rock’ (Jn 1:42) went from ‘foundation’ (v18) to ‘stumbling block’! (v23)

6. V23 ““...you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.””

- a. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs cf Atonement theory

- b. Human concern here was not going thru torture and death!
- c. The devil said to Johnny: "I'll bet a fiddle o' gold against your soul, I think I'm better than you..." (*The devil Went Down to Georgia*, 1979 by Charlie Daniels). Great song, but nope. Nothing's worth your soul.
- 7. V24 "Jesus said to his disciples 'whoever wants to be my disciple...'" – way to test the veracity of our faith.
- 8. V24 "...take up their cross [daily Luke] and follow me"
 - a. Image of willing, knowing sacrifice notwithstanding cost (also see Matt 10:34-39). Total commitment. No fence-sitting allowed!
 - b. Matt 27:46 – loneliest words ever spoken – "Eli Eli lema sabachthani"
 - c. E.G. Centurion (hardened soldier) in charge he was filled with awe at the way Jesus endured, His love, and the cataclysmic events, and said "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt 27:54); and "praised God, saying 'certainly this man was innocent'" (Luke 23:47)
 - d. "their cross" – don't look left or right but "run the race marked out" for you (Heb 12:1-3)
- 9. Vv25-27 "For..." each verse begins with this
 - a. "The conjunction Gk *gar* is primarily used to express causation or explanation...frequently used to connect thoughts, provide reasons, or clarify statements" (*Strongs Lexicon*, on www.biblehub.com)
- 10. V 25 "whoever wants to save their life will lose it..."
 - a. If our lives aren't our own, when we grasp on to them we're actually attempting to steal them from God. (ie bad idea!)
 - b. Jesus knew He was doing the Father's will – and that is enough.
 - c. Playing on the Gk *psuché*: Soul, life, self, inner being (NIV life/soul), "Jesus posed the question of what real *life* is anyway; there are more important considerations than merely physical survival" (Richard France, 'Matthew' in *NIVNBC* at 926).
- 11. V26 "what good would it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul" – all else is a big pile of Gk *skubalon* Phil 3:8-9a!
- 12. V27 "Son of Man" – Dan 7:13-14
- 13. V27 "going to come in His Father's glory with His angels"
 - a. Ref to the Parousia, or 'second coming' of Christ. (Jesus is coming, get busy!)
 - b. Immedience (Deut 6:4-5)
- 14. V27 "reward each person according to what they have done"
 - a. Whaaaa!?! What about Eph 2:8-9 (ahem, well, Eph 2:10!)
 - b. Following our will v following God's will for us (specific and not without suffering Heb 12:1-3)
 - c. September 15, 1963. 16th Street Baptist, Birmingham Alabama. We say their names: Addie Mae Collins (14), Cynthia Wesley (14), Carole Robertson (14), and Carol Denise McNair (11).

FOR THE BRAVE OF HEART

- ◇ What does Jesus suffering reveal about how I can/should go thru suffering?
- ◇ The last time I told God off it went: Great Terribly So-so
- ◇ What would it mean to me to 'gain the whole world'? (Purpose this week to earnestly assess the fulfilment of peeps who have reached that pinnacle)
- ◇ I will be 'rewarded' by Jesus for _____ (NB: if it takes time to come up with much, there's an adventure of faith God want's for you if you're willing!)
- ◇ This week I'll discuss with a spiritually astute mate how 'grace' plays into all this. (Eph 2:8-10)