

The Cross And Crown

In Mark 8:34, when Jesus was in the region of Caesarea Philippi and Peter made his great confession of Christ, Jesus told His disciples that He would suffer, be killed, and rise after three days. After an exchange with Peter Jesus called the multitude to Him and said, *"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* Christ knew what was coming, and He was telling His disciples that they had better expect difficult times too. You will not wear a crown in heaven if you are not willing to bear your cross in this life.

There are a lot of preachers and religious leaders in the world who sell a version of the gospel that produces no pain; that helps and heals all wounds. A Christian does have the *"peace of God, which passeth all understanding"* (Philippians 4:7), but living righteously can be a heavy burden. The true nature of the gospel implies hardship and persecution. Again, Jesus said, *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household"* (Matthew 10:34-36). The apostle Paul said, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Timothy 3:12).

There are outstanding joys in being a Christian, but life will not come easy. It was never designed that way. Do not let someone talk you into a crown without a cross.

Kyle Campbell