

Ministry of Grace

Matthew 16

Preface:

In the previous chapter of Matthew we saw Jesus starting to turn to the Gentiles. He responded to the Syrophenician woman when she quit trying to be like the Jews and simply came to Him as a humble, undeserving servant. We also saw Him performing many of the miracles for the Gentiles which he had previously performed only for Jews. And, we saw Him perform the feeding of the 4,000 Gentiles, after which He returned with His disciples to the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee in the area of Magdala.

In this chapter we will once more see Him being confronted by the Pharisees (joined this time by the Sadducees). Afterward, He warns His disciples about the false and misleading doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees and He began to teach them about the new institution that He was about to create, the church.

The Pharisees and Sadducees Demand Signs

Matthew 16:1-4

¹And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered them, "When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' ³And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So he left them and departed.

Mark 8:11-13 – ¹¹The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹²And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." ¹³And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

Luke 12:54-56 – ⁵⁴He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. ⁵⁶You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Notes:

This is the second time that the Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign to prove that He was the Messiah. The previous time was in **Matthew 12:38**. This time, they specifically asked Him for a sign from "heaven" and they were joined by the Sadducees. The amazing thing about the teaming up of the Pharisees and the Sadducees is that they were typically fighting against each other because of their theological differences.

The Pharisees were the ultra-conservative wing of the Jewish religious leadership. They believed that the entire Tanakh (what we call the Old Testament) was God-given Scripture and they believed in the eternity of the soul and the future bodily resurrection. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were the religious left wing. They were theologically liberal and more politically oriented. They believed that only the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) was God given and they denied the eternity of the soul or the future bodily resurrection. But, even though they were theologically opposed to each other, they came together to fight what they perceived as a common threat, Jesus.

The Pharisees were obviously stepping up their attack. Earlier in Matthew they were simply responding to the words and works of Jesus. As things proceeded, they began to seek Jesus out with the intent of initiating confrontation. Now, they are seeking Him out with the aid of the Sadducees.

Jesus' response to this request for a sign from heaven is a significant rebuke. He paraphrases a popular proverb, which is still used today.

Red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky in the morning, sailors warning.

He accused them of being able to know what weather was coming by the signs of the sky, but they were unable to know the Messiah in spite of the signs that had already been done and the Messianic prophecies that had been fulfilled in front of their own eyes. He then repeated what He had told them previously that no sign would be given them except the sign of Jonah the prophet.

Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducee

Matthew 16:5-12

⁵When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ⁷And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." ⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹²Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Mark 8:14-21 – ¹⁴Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." ¹⁶And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." ²¹And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Notes:

After Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees and Sadducees, He and His disciples crossed over to the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee again. We are not told where this interaction between Jesus and His disciples took place, but according to Mark's gospel account, this discussion appears to have begun while they were still in the boat. And, we learn in verse 16 that right after this they went to Caesarea Philippi.

Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Once again, they missed the fact that He was speaking metaphorically. They thought that He was talking about literal leaven and reasoned that it was because they had forgotten to pack some bread for their travels. When Jesus perceived that the disciples were concerned about not having enough bread, He responded to them. His first comment was "O you of little faith." In the Greek text, He is a little more condemning. He calls them "you little-faiths." They had seen Jesus multiply food to feed the 5,000 Jews and then do it again to feed the 4,000 Gentiles. How could they possibly have forgotten about these two miracles? It also makes me wonder, "What did the disciples do with the 7 storage baskets full of bread that were left over from the feeding of the 4,000."

Then Jesus explained to His disciples that he was not referring to literal leaven, but to the false teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both the groups had infected Israel with their false doctrines. The Pharisees were legalists who taught that only obedience to the Law and the Traditions of the Elders would please God. The Sadducees, on the other hand, had a very liberal theology, denying that there would ever be a theocratic kingdom on earth, teaching that angels do not exist and that there will be no bodily resurrection.

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

Matthew 16:13-20

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Mark 8:27-30 – ²⁷And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Luke 9:18-20 – ¹⁸Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" ¹⁹And they answered, "John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen." ²⁰Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God."

John 6:66-71 – ⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." ⁷⁰Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." ⁷¹He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

Notes:

This is the first mention of Caesarea Philippi in Matthew's gospel. If you will look at the map you will see that it is about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. The city was originally called Paneas after the Greek god Pan, the god of shepherds and nature. It was located at the Southwestern base of Mt. Hermon. At Caesarea Philippi there is a huge cliff face with a large cave at its base out of which comes water fed by one of the four springs that form the Jordan River. There was a shrine to Pan carved into this cliff and it was here that Herod the Great built a temple for the worship of Caesar Augustus. His son, Herod Philipp, later expanded the temple and named the town for Caesar. But, since there was already a city named Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast, Herod Phillip added his own name to the city. Thus, it became Caesarea Philippi.

The cave and the grotto at its entrance were referred to as the Gates of Hades because the people of that area believed that their fertility gods (including Pan) lived in the underworld during the winter and returned to the surface from this cave every spring. In the first century, this area was the center for various types of pagan worship activities, with all kinds of acts of licentiousness, including religious prostitution. It was sort of the Las Vegas of Palestine.

It was here that Jesus asked His disciples who people believed Jesus was. Based on the answers given, the people obviously believed that Jesus was a Holy Man, able to perform miraculous feats. However, the people of Israel did not believe that He was the Messiah. Yet, when Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was, Peter was quick to answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

This was the beginning of a new era! Peter, and we must assume the rest of the disciples, has finally confessed the true divine nature of Jesus. After having so recently been declared "little faiths," His closest followers have now "seen the light." And – for those of you who still have not caught on to the reality of divine election – Jesus revealed to Peter and the other disciples that it was not their own intellectual decision making process or human reasoning that led to this conclusion. He told them, it was none other than God the Father revealing this truth to them. Their spiritual blindness had finally been healed. (see [Isaiah 6:10](#) and [John 12:40](#))

The stone, the rock, the solid rock, and the gates of hades.

The next two verses (verses 18 and 19) are two of the most misunderstood and misinterpreted verses in the New Testament. The Catholic Church has, for years, used these verses to justify their belief that Peter was the first Pope and that he was given the power to forgive sins. However, the text does not support that. The first half of verse eighteen says:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church ...

Simon Peter confessed that Jesus is God the Son, and Jesus informed His disciples that the knowledge of His deity was given to them by God the Father. He now makes a heavenly pronouncement. The very next words are "And I tell you." In Greek, word order is significant. Jesus is clearly equating Himself with God, the Father.

For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter ...

In **John 1:42** we read that when Jesus first met Simon, he said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah; you shall be called Cephias ...” The name Cephias is an Aramaic name equivalent to the Greek *petros*. In verse 18 here, Christ says, “And I tell you, you are *petros* and on this *petra* I will build my church ...” *Petros* means “a stone;” not a small stone or a pebble, but a large stone, a piece or fragment of a rock. It’s the word that is used to describe a large stone that is used to construct a building. Peter is a building block. In the Apostle Paul’s first letter to the church in Corinth, he says:

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (**1 Corinthians 3:10-11**)

However, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul tells us that we, too are part of the building:

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (**Ephesians 2:20**)

So, we see that Simon *petros* is a building stone, but what does the word *petra* refer to? *Petra* means “a huge projecting rock or a cliff.” The Hebrew equivalent is *seh’lah*. Catholics say that *petra* is also referring to Peter. However, if Jesus meant that Peter is the one on whom the church was to be built, He would have used the same word, *petros*. It makes more sense that Jesus is referring to something else, since He used a different word. It’s possible that Jesus is referring to Himself since He is the foundation. This is further supported by the fact that in the Old Testament, God is referred to as a rock (*seh’lah*) more than 120 times. Here are just a few of them.

For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? (**2 Samuel 22:32**)

The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation, (**2 Samuel 22:47**)

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (**Psalms 18:2**)

For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? (**Psalms 18:31**)

The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation (**Psalms 18:46**)

It is also possible, and I think it is more likely, that what Jesus was referring to as the *petra* was the confession of faith that Peter made, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” It is this confession of faith upon which Jesus is building the church. Without this confession, a person cannot be a Christian and is not part of the church. This confession is the very bedrock of our faith and of the church.

In the second half of verse 18, Jesus said, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” So, what does that mean? First of all, the word “it” refers to the church. Next, the word translated “hell” is actually *hades* the Greek place of the departed dead. In our study of Hades last year, we learned that it is located in the heart of the earth, and before the resurrection of Jesus, it consisted of Paradise, the place of torments, and a great gulf. We also learned that before Jesus’ resurrection every soul went to Hades upon physical death. So – what does the expression, “the

gates of hades” in verse 18 refer to? Gates are typically used either to keep things out or to keep things in. When gates are used to keep things out, they take on a defensive posture. If these gates were used as a defensive measure, then Jesus would have been saying that the gates of hades will not prevent the church from getting in. But no one is trying to **get into** hades. The other sense of a gate is to keep people in, such as prison gates. And, what is it that keeps people in the prison of hades? It is the same thing that got them there in the first place, death. This appears to be Jesus meaning with regard to the gates of Hades. “The gates of Hades” refers to death itself.

What Jesus is saying is that **death** will not prevail against the church. Why not? First of all, because Jesus overcame death when He was resurrected. And, remember what Peter’s confession was? “**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” Secondly, because Jesus has overcome death, we too have escaped spiritual death. We have eternal life!

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.
(1 John 5:11-12)

Notice, as I have taught before, that he who has the Son (every Christian) has life. It does not say, “will have life,” but “has life” and this life is eternal. So – because Jesus has overcome death and He gives us eternal life through our confession of faith, the power of death (the gates of hades) will not prevail against us.

Now let me share a couple of final thoughts about Jesus, His disciples, and the city of Caesarea Philippi. Throughout the Old Testament God is referred to as a rock (Hebrew *seh’lah*, a huge rock or a cliff). And now that “Solid Rock,” that “Rock of Ages” is revealing to His disciples, new truths about His church, things which have never been told to man before. And – let me ask you, where were Jesus (the rock) and His disciples when He had this conversation with them? They were in Caesarea Philippi. Look at these images.



In this first image we see an artist’s depiction of Caesarea Philippi situated in front of a massive cliff (a *petra*) with water flowing out of the spring.



In this second picture we see a modern photograph of that same cliff with the water flowing out of the spring. What do we see at the base of the cliff? It is a cave. This is the cave that, even during the first century, was known as “the Gates of Hades.” Is it any wonder that Jesus used the word *petra* and the expression “The Gates of Hades” during this discourse with His disciples?

Now, the very next verse in Matthew 16 says:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
(Matthew 16:19)

Catholics believe that this is when Jesus gave Peter the authority to forgive sins. In the Greek, both of the verbs “shall be bound” and “shall be loosed” are in the future perfect tense. Remember, the perfect tense is the tense of past completed action with the focus on the effect of that action. So, with these verbs both being future perfect verbs (meaning, will have been, or shall have been), this verse can properly be translated as:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth **shall have already been bound** in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth **shall have already been loosed** in heaven.

In other words, this binding and loosing, whatever they are, are simply a response to what has already been decreed in heaven, not a cause for what will be decreed in heaven. Also notice that later in His message to all the disciples, Jesus conferred on all the disciples the same power:

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18:18)

So, was Peter really the first Pope, supreme leader of the Christian church? Well, in addition to what we’ve just looked at, consider what Paul tells us in Galatians (Galatians 2:11-14). While Paul was in Antioch, he observed Peter acting contrary to the truth of the gospel, even causing Barnabas to be led astray, so he confronted Peter and chastened him. He would not

have done this if Peter were the Pope. Also, at the Jerusalem council in Acts chapter 15, when the leaders of the church had a discussion about whether or not the Gentiles had to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved, it was not Peter who had the final word, it was James.

The bottom line is this, there is absolutely no scriptural evidence to indicate that Peter had any superiority over the other Apostles and he was not singled out as having the authority to forgive sins.

At the end of this discourse with His disciples at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus strictly charged them not to tell anyone that He is the Christ.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Matthew 16:21-23

²¹From 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 on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Mark 8:31-33 – ³¹And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Luke 9:21-22 – ²¹And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²²saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Notes:

After laying these heavy teachings on His disciples and telling them not to talk to anyone about Him being the Christ, Jesus began preparing them for some of the worst days of their lives. Jesus informed them that they would be returning to Jerusalem where the Elders, Chief Priests, and the Scribes will cause Him to suffer and He will be killed and later, raised from the dead.

Peter, now knowing for certain that Jesus is the true Messiah, couldn't comprehend Jesus being overcome by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, so he rebuked Jesus. In effect, he was saying, "You don't have to do that. You are the Messiah. You will defeat them, they won't defeat you. You don't have to die to prove you're the Messiah!" Jesus' response was to call Peter Satan. Why? Remember right after Jesus was baptized and he was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan? Satan told Jesus that all He had to do to rule over the kingdoms of the world was to bow down and worship Satan. However, Jesus knew that the only way to have the authority that only He deserved was to do the will of the Father, which included dying on the cross for the sins of the world and being raised again from the grave. Since Peter was trying to convince Jesus that He didn't have to go to the cross, he was delivering the same message that Satan had. He was reasoning with an earthly perspective instead of a heavenly perspective.

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

Matthew 16:24-28

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Matthew 10:37-39 – ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Mark 8:34-38 – ³⁴And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷For what can a man give in return for his soul? ³⁸For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Luke 9:23-27 – ²³And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

Notes:

After telling the disciples that He was now going to return to Jerusalem to suffer and die, Jesus challenged them to be prepared to suffer themselves. He instructed them regarding one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith. To gain freedom we must give up freedom. To gain life we must give up life. To gain the most for ourselves in our eternal life we must be willing to give up what we desire the most in this earthly life.

He told His disciples (and He is telling us) that it is futile to seek after possessions and power in this life. Even if we attain such things, at the end of our life they will vanish. Instead of keeping our focus on earthly things we need to keep our focus on heavenly things. Then, to help His disciples focus on eternity, Jesus reminded them that He will return some day in His glory. And, when He does, He will reward (repay) His faithful servants for what they have done in this life and for what they have given up in order to do so.

So What?

Jesus told His disciples that in order to truly be His disciples they would have to learn to do three things: deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him. What do these mean?

Deny Self – As Christians, we are in a constant battle between the indwelling Holy Spirit and our inherent sin nature. The Holy Spirit wants our singular focus to be on God, but our sin nature wants our focus to be on self and the satisfaction of our desires. This is the “self” that we are to deny. The writer of the book of Hebrews describes it this way:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (**Hebrews 12:1**) [NKJV]

We all have at least one type of sin that seems to rear its ugly head over and over again. It is extremely difficult to deny these inner sinful desires, but we must learn to do it. These inner desires are made even more powerful if we try to have one foot in the world and one foot in our faith. The Apostle John described the world this way:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. (**1 John 2:16**) [NASB]

And James says:

... Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (**James 4:4**)

So, we cannot deny self if our focus is still on the world.

Take up our Cross – Crucifixion was well known in Israel in the 1st century. And, it was a common practice for the person being crucified to carry his own cross. Carrying the cross was a physical testimony to the criminal’s guilt. It brought shame and it was an intense burden both physically and emotionally. In Jesus’ case, when He carried His cross (until He couldn’t carry it any longer) and hung on it, it was a sacrifice that He gave for us. In Romans, Paul tells us:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (**Romans 12:1-2**)

When we present ourselves to God and commit to living to please Him instead of ourselves, it is a sacrifice. One that is well pleasing to God!

Follow Him – The result of denying our self and taking up our cross is that our life focus becomes centered on God and on eternity, not on ourselves or the world we are wandering through. When we succeed in denying ourselves and taking up our cross, we are following Him.

Now What?

Are you ready yet to give up and give in to God? Are you ready to quit doing your own thing and commit to doing His thing? Are you ready to deny yourself and do His will instead of your own?

Let’s pray.

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