

# Peter 4 of 10

## *Take the Cross*

#0378

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—August 3, 1969

We'll turn to Matthew 16, beginning with the 13<sup>th</sup> verse. We're going to learn some more about Peter this morning. I want to meet Peter. I will, someday soon. Is He going to be there? *Thank God*, his name is in one of those twelve foundations of the Holy City.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” Matthew 16:13–15.

Who answers? Oh, yes.

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock” Matthew 16:16–18.

The rock of your confession—the fact that I am the Messiah.

“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” Matthew 16:18–19.

It's a wonderful scene, isn't it? With the twelve disciples around Him, He draws out the fact that Israel has not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. At best they've said He's a miracle worker, He's a prophet. But among the twelve, thank God, the light had dawned, the knowledge had come, the conviction had deepened that this was indeed, as Peter had expressed it, the advent of the Messiah. *Jesus* was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

So Christ acknowledges their acknowledgment and proceeds to announce the building of His church upon this great truth. Yet in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse, He had to tell the disciples not to preach to the multitudes at that time that He was the Messiah. They wouldn't understand.

Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> verse:

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” Matthew 16:21.

This is all in the same interview. He begins to tell His disciples what? That He has to go to Jerusalem and suffer. Notice those three words in the third line; “He must go,” And the two words in the next line; “and suffer.” Let’s put those five words together. “He must go, and suffer.” Jesus, having accepted their acknowledgment that He’s the Messiah, proceeds with the unfolding of the work of the Messiah.

Isaiah had presented the Messiah as the suffering servant, the One who was to make atonement through His death. But to the Jews of Christ’s day, this was an unknown and unwanted truth. They were looking upon the Messiah as the One who would deliver them from the Romans, make Israel the head of the kingdoms, and give the Israelites the rule of this world.

So having accepted the fact that He was the Messiah, having accepted their acknowledgment of this, Jesus must lead them into an understanding of the Messiah’s work. “He must go and suffer.” The Lamb had appeared. He must go to the altar. The sins must be put upon Him. He must suffer. He must bleed. He must die.

“He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” Matthew 16:21.

Now, Peter responds. Just as he’d responded to the first part of the interview, he leads right out in the second part. What does he say?

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him”  
Matthew 16:22.

Think of it! The disciple is talking to his Master; the student is reproving his Teacher. But this is Peter.

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke Him saying,  
Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee”  
Matthew 16:22.

But Jesus did not say to him, as He had said a few moments before, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona.” Oh, no. A few moments before the Holy Spirit had been talking to Peter and through Peter. Who is talking now? Satan. And the proof is the next verse:

“He [Jesus] turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou

savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” Matthew 16:23.

Notice the contrast. In the preceding interchange of words, Peter has expressed faith.

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” Matthew 16:16.

Jesus has said:

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” Matthew 16:17.

“Peter, God is speaking through you now, not men.” But now He has to say to Peter, “Satan’s talking.”

Is it possible for a man to speak for God one hour, and the Devil the next hour, even before the hour is over? Apparently it is. It was with Peter. We need to learn that lesson, and we need to learn it both ways. Just because a man says something for God is no sign that we should accept everything he says after that. Oh, no. Even five minutes later. Everything must be tested.

So God, through Jesus, said, “Peter, you’ve missed it. Another master has gotten hold of you. Another voice is speaking. Another mind is controlling yours.” And speaking directly to that unseen one who was controlling Peter, Jesus said, “Get thee behind me Satan. These things that are coming from Peter’s lips didn’t come from God. They came from you, Satan. Get away. Get out of here.”

Now, let us see what Peter was trying to get Jesus to do. Notice that twenty-second verse again:

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him saying,  
Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee”  
Matthew 16:22.

If your Bible has a margin, look at the margin there on “be it far from thee, Lord.” What is it? “Pity Thyself.” “Why, Lord. Surely, You wouldn’t let this happen to You. Take care of Yourself, Lord. If they’re going to treat You like that up at Jerusalem, don’t go up there. Pity Thyself.”

There were several reasons Peter said this. In the first place, he loved his Lord as he had expressed it before and after that. In the second place, he loved Peter. And Peter, as we have seen, all the way through wanted to be where? Close to Jesus. And if Jesus was going to get hurt, then it might not be so comfortable for Peter, you understand.

So he said, “Lord, don’t go into trouble. You don’t want trouble for Yourself, and we don’t want trouble. Keep out of trouble. Keep out of suffering. Keep out of

persecution. Keep out. Pity Thyself, Lord. This shall not be unto Thee.” But Jesus, of course, reproved him.

Let's go on because Christ didn't stop. He didn't soften things down. He didn't tone things down.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up *his* cross, and follow Me” Matthew 16:24.

He says, “You are feeling bad because *I'm* going to the cross. But I have to tell you, there's a cross for *you* as well as for Me. And to travel in My company means that as I must go and carry My cross and be crucified, so *you* must come and take up *your* cross, and carry *it*, and be crucified.”

You see, it was a custom among the Romans that the condemned criminal who was to be crucified had to carry his own cross from the place of judgment to the place of execution. Just as a man, at some times, has been compelled to dig his own grave before he was shot. But this was worse, of course, because he was not to be mercifully dispatched in a moment, but he was to die a long, slow, lingering death *nailed* to that tree.

And now, Jesus is saying, “I am going up there and suffer this. Do you want to go with Me? There's a cross for you. A long lingering death by self-denial. Do you see that cross? That's your cross. I'm going to bear *my* cross. There's a cross for you. Will you pick it up, not run away from it? Will you carry it, not throw it down? I am taking My cross willingly. You must accept yours *voluntarily*. There's no force here.”

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” Matthew 16:24–25.

You remember two mornings ago that we were studying that statement of Jesus to Peter, some months later there in the garden of Gethsemane—“Peter, put up the sword,”

“For all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword” Matthew 26:52.

It isn't just killing somebody else, using the sword in self-defense, that brings death by the sword at last. All effort to defend self, all desire to live for self, tends ultimately to self-destruction. God has so arranged things that the life that lives for self must perish. The only life that can be preserved is the life that gives itself in service, and if need be, in sacrifice, in death.

This is the law of life for the universe. This is the character of God. This is what God *was* before sin ever appeared. This is what God *manifested* Himself to be,

when sin made that revelation necessary. This is what Jesus is sharing with His disciples. And this is what He is inviting them to share.

Aren't you glad we don't live in a time when people die on crosses? Aren't you glad we're living in a time when there's no problem like this, no danger like this? Or is there? Ah, yes, for the message comes ringing down to our ears this morning, the words of the Master:

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" Matthew 16:24.

In *Desire of Ages*, we have a sentence that to me, just stands right out on the page. It is the story commenting on what we have read this morning:

"Peter did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ" *The Desire of Ages*, page 415.

When Jesus introduced the cross, Peter said, "Be it far from Thee Lord. Let's not go that way. There's a different way, a better way."

Satan had tried the same approach before in the wilderness of temptation. He'd taken Jesus up to an exceeding high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to Christ, "All these things I will give Thee if You will" do what? "Worship me."

"Over here is the path to Calvary. Jesus, You don't want to go that way. Why take that toilsome, bitter, difficult, painful road of death. I'll give it to you without all that. Just worship me, and I'll give it to you. But Jesus turned away from the glory and took the shame. He turned away from that gift of the Devil with the strings in it—worship Satan. And He said:

"Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve"  
Matthew 4:10.

Now Satan has returned with the same temptation, but using one of Christ's closest disciples to present the invitation. "Be it far from Thee, Lord. Don't go the way of the cross. There's a better way than that. There's an easier way."

You know, friends, Satan is still in this business of showing us how to do the work of God without the cross. Oh, people are perfectly willing for the cross of *Christ* to be uplifted, provided it means that since *Jesus* took the cross, we don't have to. He took it for us. He took the hard time, so we can have an easy time. He was homeless, so we could have lovely homes. He walked, so we can ride. He was nailed to the cross, so we can sit comfortably and enjoy life.

You know, in the experience of the remnant church, we face these same tests. God gave this people a message of health reform and medical ministry. I stood yesterday at the grave of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. A little bit before, I'd been up there and seen the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

I've been pondering over what God tried to do for and with this people in the health reform and medical missionary work. Do you know what He tried to do? He tried to get us to take up the cross. Health reform and medical missionary work present two great crosses. One touches the appetite; the other touches the love of money and ease. Both come pretty close to the selfish heart.

When health reform comes along and says to a man, "Not only must you give up your whiskey and your tobacco, your tea and your coffee, but it must come closer. Leave those flesh meats. Leave the excess of sweets. Leave a lot of these artificial desserts. Quit eating in between meals. Learn to enjoy simple foods. And don't overeat." Every one of those things, my friends, to people today is a cross, isn't it?

But there are people sitting here this morning that leaving whiskey alone presents no cross to them. Is it a cross to you to leave whiskey alone? Oh, no. But somewhere along the line, health reform will present a cross to you. Somewhere along the line, your appetite and what is really best, those two things cross. What does Jesus say? Pick up the cross. Carry it. Don't evade it. But Peter would say, "Isn't there *some way*?"

My dear friends, it is amazing to me today all the inventions that there are to make (I was about to say) health reform palatable. And don't misunderstand me. I don't mean that we should deliberately make it unpalatable. No. We're told that we should study to make dishes that are attractive and all that. But what *I'm* trying to say is, friends: After we get done with it, if we are doing it God's way, it still presents a cross to the natural, unregenerate heart.

But more than that, health reform includes in its *broad* features medical ministry. Dr. Kellogg was used by God to bring to this people an appeal to help the poor, the suffering, the weak, the needy, the blind, the orphans and all that. Dr. Kellogg, led by the Holy Spirit, was not only a great reformer, he was a great humanitarian. He learned those things from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. He learned those things from James and Ellen White, who were like a father and a mother to him.

If there were ever two philanthropists in the true sense of the term, they were James and Ellen White. I stood by their graves yesterday. And as I think of the selflessness manifested in the lives of James and Ellen White, how they poured out their lives in service for anybody and everybody all through their years, oh, my dear friends, I would that we could learn the lesson.

I want to tell you something. If as a people, we had been willing to accept health reform, and the unselfish medical ministry that Dr. Kellogg was seeking to promote, I don't think that Dr. Kellogg would ever have lost his way and stumbled along outside this movement. Oh friends, some people are going to have something to answer for at the judgment bar of God—that they have made a god of their bellies, and were willing to pass by on the other side.

Now, the lesson comes to us this morning. What are we going to do about it? Just as today there are all sorts of inventions to make health reform palatable, so

there's no cross to it, so there has been now for decades a growing spirit of learning how to do medical missionary work without any sacrifice at all. And we've come to the time when to thousands of our young people offers are presented in how to be in what's called the medical work and still make a good living, live better than the rest of the people in general. Some have spoken of it as medical mercenary, instead of medical missionary.

My dear friends, these are tests this denomination must yet face. Dr. Kellogg is dead. James and Ellen White are dead. But Jesus isn't dead. Jesus is in the sanctuary above, presenting His blood. He's there as the Lamb slain. It still costs to provide the plan of salvation:

“The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that from its very inception sin has brought to the heart of God” *Education*, page 263.

As Jesus is, in a sense, still on the cross—the cross of this world's pain and woe and suffering—so I say to you, that those who follow Him, and those who choose to enter into fellowship with Him, will find a cross.

Don't misunderstand me. I don't mean that we need to manufacture any crosses. If God, in His providence, has given us a comfortable bed, He's not calling us to get out of bed and get down on a hard floor, just to prove that we can take the cross. That isn't the thing I'm talking about.

I simply say to you, my dear friends, that if we press close to Jesus, we will find that in the control of appetite, somewhere, we'll meet a cross. And in giving our lives in service for others, in helping the poor and the needy, the sick and the suffering, Jesus will call us to depart from the commercial and professional ways of this world, and meet the need, at whatever cost to us.

The Holy Spirit has to guide each one. We cannot dictate for others. But oh, we can ourselves pray that God will give us a revelation of the cross, such as finally came to Peter.

Let's go over now to 1 Peter, again, and see how Peter finally learned this wonderful lesson. Thank God. 1 Peter 2:21. We read part of this the other morning, but I want to note something further in it, this morning:

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” 1 Peter 2:21.

Again:

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”

1 Peter 4:12–13.

Yes, suffering and trial await the Christian. But to the one who has viewed the cross of Christ, there's no turning back. We sang this morning:

Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee;  
All things else I have forsaken,  
Thou from hence my all shalt be.

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