

**No Pain, No Gain**

**FOURTEEN**

## CHOOSE TO LIVE

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*Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”*

Matthew 16:24

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*And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”*

Mark 8:34

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*And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*

Luke 9:23

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When enrolled in a course of study, the students are informed by the professor of the course requirements. The student's grades will reflect how well they meet the standard. When a person joins the military, there are rules to be followed. Weekend passes and advancement depend on performance. This is also true in business. Employers set quotas to be met by the salespeople. Evaluations and promotions are subject to meeting those goals. In each case the person is rewarded in proportion to the effort he expended and his accomplishments.

Likewise for the exchanged life, effort is rewarded. This chapter addresses the reasons behind the different perspectives held by Reformed and Free Grace theology. The *first* deals with the *requirements* for loss of one's life in devotion to Christ. The *second* concerns the *results* of submission to those demands. The requirements and the result of the seven passages are presented in the chart, *Requirements and Results of Discipleship* (page 182). We will again address only Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; and Luke 9:23 in detail.

### Issue Four Paradox Requirements

The *requirements* for losing one's life in devotion to Christ are found in Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; and Luke 9:23. They are to deny oneself, to take up one's cross, and to follow Christ. A spokesman for the Reformed position says, "Let me say again unequivocally

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<b>REQUIREMENTS and RESULTS OF DISCIPLESHIP</b> (Parallel Passages)		
<b>Text</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Results</b>
Matt. 10:32–39	Deny family and take up cross	Confess Me, Confess him but Deny Me, Deny him
Matt. 16:24–27	Deny self, take up cross, and follow Me	Rewarded, according to Deeds
Mark 8:34–38	Deny self, take up cross, and follow Me	If Ashamed of God then God Ashamed of him
Luke 9:23–26	Deny self, take up cross, and follow Me	If Ashamed of God then God Ashamed of him
Luke 14:25–35	Hate family and life, Carry cross and come after Me, and give up possessions	Become Useful or Useless
Luke 17:31–34	—	—
John 12:24–26	Serves Me	God will Honor him

that Jesus’ summons to deny self and follow Him was an invitation to salvation.”<sup>1</sup> Make no mistake, the Reformed view believes that these commands refer to saving faith.<sup>2</sup> How do advocates of the Reformed view defend their position against the accusation that it is salvation by works? Of course they cannot refute the accusation biblically; however, they erroneously appeal to the merging of justification with sanctification.<sup>3</sup> In this effort one proponent typifies their response when he says, “Together the three [commands to deny self, take up cross, and follow Christ] indicate *true conversion*, fol-

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lowed by lifelong *sanctification*.”<sup>4</sup> Both are blended into one. On the other hand, the Free Grace view believes Christ’s commands are for those who already possess eternal life, and it is for those whom Jesus provides the blueprint for experiencing intimacy in fellowship. Salvation is distinguished from sanctification.

The Reformed viewpoint is shaped by their complex idea of working faith, requiring a commitment of life at salvation, mixing justification with sanctification. This author believes that that entire concept is foreign to the Scriptures.

Rather, the Free Grace position is shaped by simple faith alone in Christ for salvation, distinguishing between types of disciples (see chap. 13) and distinguishing between justification and sanctification. The application of these contrasting definitions of faith (working faith versus simple faith) affect one’s understanding of Christ’s demands for discipleship.<sup>5</sup> Obviously both definitions of faith cannot be correct. Either one or the other definition is erroneous.

Discipleship is not a heaven-or-hell issue based on working faith; rather it is a fellowship issue based on salvation through simple faith. Since the application of error can lead to further error, one must be careful which he chooses.

Based on simple faith and the context of the passages, these requirements are directed toward believers, not unbelievers. Commitment and devotion to Christ leading to intimate fellowship require a denial of the believer’s self-indulgent behavior, whether in thought or action. Self-sacrifice in devotion and allegiance to Christ are compulsory. They demand submission and obedience to the will of God. Just as Christ went in humiliation to His cross, so the believer’s cross

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means a daily dying to one's self, accepting suffering for Christ's sake, and possibly the ultimate sacrifice of physical death. Personal expectations are gone and the believer is to conform to God's Word. Based on the first two requirements, devotion to Christ requires a directional change, a continual, intimate association with Him on a journey along the path leading to the saving of one's life.

### Issue Five Paradox Results

The *results* of submission to Christ's demands in discipleship are found in Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38; and Luke 9:23. In fact the previous chart, *Requirements and Results of Discipleship*, sets forth the reward of obeying Christ's commands that are contained in the seven passages listed. Mark 8 and Luke 9 address *shame* from failing to follow Christ, while Matthew 16 concerns a *reward*. These

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reward) depend  
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two results depend on obedience. Rewards are in return for obedience. Reformed and Free Grace positions again come to different conclusions. That should not surprise us since both understand that Christ's words are directed to different audiences; the Reformed view believes that unbelievers and salvation are

addressed, whereas Free Grace advocates say that believers are addressed and the topic is discipleship.

With the cost of discipleship directed toward unbelievers in the Reformed view, those ashamed of Jesus have not denied self, taken up the cross, and followed Him; they are not believers.<sup>6</sup> When Christ returns, He likewise will be ashamed of them; rejecting them and condemning them forever because they did not believe.<sup>7</sup>

The Free Grace view agrees that those ashamed of Jesus have not denied self, taken up the cross, and followed Christ. Neverthe-

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less, since believers are the intended audience, heaven or hell is not the issue. Rather than salvation as the issue, the believer's intimacy in fellowship with Christ takes center stage. One spokesman says both a negative and a positive aspect are in view. He writes, "Luke mentioned shame as a negative result (see also Mark 8:38), and Matthew mentioned reward, a positive result."<sup>8</sup> Addressing the negative aspect, Zane Hodges says,

Why was He ashamed of them? Because they had been ashamed of Him! Not that they rejected Him, not that they did not believe, it was simply that He was an embarrassment to them. Instead of exhibiting the loyalty of true discipleship, instead of picking up their cross of self-denial day by day and clearly walking before men as followers of Him, they had been ashamed to do so.<sup>9</sup>

He continues in this same vein, saying,

The question about life, therefore, which the Son of God was addressing to His hearers was profoundly searching. It was not, "What did you *have*?" but "What did you *become*?" And if a man *became* a true disciple to the Master, he would be acknowledged and honored in the kingdom of God. And if not, the Savior would be ashamed.<sup>10</sup>

Concerning the positive aspect, Earl Radmacher indicates that these passages are not addressing justification. Rather, he says,

Salvation is a gift. However, no mention is made in Luke 9:23-27 or its parallel passages about eternal life or salvation as a gift from God. Instead, He was discussing the matter of reward for believers who serve Him faithfully and loss of reward for those who don't. Jesus' words are similar to what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all

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appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”<sup>11</sup>

Matthew 16:27 speaks of a judgment of works at the return of Christ. “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds.” As indicated previously, believers’ works, whether good or bad, will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor.

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5:10). That event relates to believers, which results in the gain or lose of rewards. If the event relates to salvation, the only judgment in view would be the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). There works reveal that nothing a person does can merit God’s gracious work of salvation. As discussed above, the

Reformed view “shoehorns” the Great White Throne Judgment into the context of Matthew 16. Nevertheless fellowship and rewards, not salvation, are addressed in the “Come after Me” and “Follow Me” passages.

### Cause and Effect

In a game the score determines the winner. In business, revenue gains or losses determine the company’s stock price. Other factors aside, effort expended is critical to success. Likewise in the Christian life, success is the product of energy expended when it comes to faithfulness. Results determine confidence or shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Differing from salvation that is free without cost or effort, *working out that salvation* in discipleship requires effort and comes with a price.



## Chapter 14, NOTES

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1. John F. MacArthur Jr., *The Gospel According To Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 196.
2. Ibid., 135; William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 498; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 517, 519; and James Boice, *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 107.
3. Ken Neff, *Hold Fast* (St. Augustine, FL: LeaderQuest, 2010), 28.  
“Myth 1: It’s Always about Heaven and Hell” (21-31) presents the relationship between justification and sanctification for each theological position: Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Free Grace.
4. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke*, 498.
5. Ken Neff, *Hold Fast* (St. Augustine, FL: LeaderQuest, 2010), 43-53.  
“Myth 3: Faith Is a Tricky Word” presents a comparison in definitions of faith between Reformed theology and Free Grace theology.
6. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, 522.
7. Ibid., 523; and Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke*, 501.
8. Earl D. Radmacher, *Salvation* (Nashville: Word, 2000), 205.
9. Zane C. Hodges, *A Free Grace Primer* (Denton, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2011), 87.
10. Ibid., 80 (*italics his*).
11. Radmacher, *Salvation*, 205.

