

The Cross before the Crown  
(Matt. 16:24)

YAHSHUA said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. It is a command that demands faithfulness and perseverance in the faith. The Christian is enriched with the Word of God's promises, if only he or she takes his or her cross leaving the world behind them to overcome temptations by denying self. Because YAHSHUA overcame the world, we too can, as He said, In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. The crown must always be followed by the carrying of the cross. He was victorious and left us the example for us to follow. He victoriously overcame our cross self-denying to the point of death. There is so much around us that distract us from the heavenly command to carry our cross to receive our crown, and often we forget the cross and follow the flesh's desires. We, many times, want the crown without the responsibility of carrying the cross, a gesture which our Savior, after He appeared in human form, abased and humble Himself and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross! Therefore God highly exalted Him and has finely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that in that name every knee must bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Phil. 2:8-11).

There will be no crown without the cross, my friends. Although it is not easy to live a perfect Christian life, it is possible to live to love YAHWEH above self. The rich man lost because he loved riches and self more than YAHWEH. The cross was not possible for him to carry because his love was in the wrong place. When we carry our cross, we are showing humility in submission to the command of YAHSHUA. The strength to do so comes from His Spirit, Who intercedes for us. The fulfillment of the Law abides in the fact of loving others in the act of self-denial. We pierced His head with a crown of thorns, while He was carrying our cross; but if we remain faithful to Him He will reward us with a beautiful crown.

It is hard to carry our cross without the love for our Savior. In view of what He did for us, love must compel us to go beyond a mile or two to obey Him. The Word says, we love Him, because He loved us first. Yes, He set His sacrificial love while on the cross for the whole world to receive; and to follow Him by the carrying of our own cross. Paul said, we are to share His suffering, if we are to share His glory (Rom. 8:17b). He reminds us that the sufferings of this life are not to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us. We must carry our cross in pursuit of our crown. Sometimes the cross seems heavier than other times; but we will be more than conquerors through Him Who gives us the strength. An athlete must give all he has in self-discipline to be able to succeed in his pursuit to win the race. So it is with us in our daily walk of faith. To the Church of Smyrna the angel said, Fear nothing that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is indeed about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested and proved and critically appraised. . . . Be loyally faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one may rob you and deprive you of your crown (3:11). The crown of life is for those who suffer without compromising the faith by love of self.

In life there is always a short cut for about everything; but this principle should never be applied to the teachings of Christ, for one cannot cut short the cross for self-convenience. What our Lord expects of us is complete surrender to His will in complete self-denial. The world offers us lots of garbage dressed in beautiful clothing to tempt us. Our duty to our Savior, however, is to look up to Him and strip and throw aside every unnecessary weight that clings to and entangles us; with patient and endurance and steady and active persistence follow the appointed course that is set before us following the example of our Lord YAHSHUA, He Who endured the cross, despising and ignoring the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2). Yes, our Savior endured from the sinners such grievous opposition and bitter hostility against Himself, yet He carried our cross and accomplished the work of our salvation, so that we would carry our cross in the strength of His example.

The way we will pursue our crown is by the carrying the cross to the end, looking always to the Author and consummator of our faith- YAHSHUA!

**THINK ABOUT IT!**