

The Badge of the Family (Luke 9:18–26)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (1/10/2021)

Introduction

1. This great multitude has one thing in common—they are all of *one* family.
 - a. They have family likeness, for they all have one Father and Brother in whose image they were created.
 - b. They all walk by faith and not by sight.
 - c. They are unified in His Spirit, sing God’s praise, and worship the Lamb slain for their salvation (Revelation 5:9, 10).
 - d. They are all sprinkled by the same blood, begotten again by the same Spirit, and rejoice in one hope, being the heirs of the same inheritance.
2. Their shared but unique character marks them in every age of history, reflecting the One who is “*the same yesterday and today and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8).
3. They also have this that they share with their Lord—they glory in the cross that they bear without shame. Indeed, they make it their boast: “*But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*” (Galatians 6:14).
4. John was given a startling vision in the Revelation as he was told to “*behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah*” who *conquered* and was, thus, worthy to open the seals of the scroll. He, no doubt, expected to see a noble lion, fierce and fearsome. Instead, John writes, “*I saw a lamb standing, as though it had been slain*” (Revelation 5:5, 6). When the bloodied Lamb opened the fifth seal, we do not find victorious saints waving the victory flag; we see martyred saints, “*slain for the word of God and the witness they bore,*” pleading for justice (5:9). That is reality.
5. This identifying mark of cross-bearing was established in the beginning (Genesis 3:15). God informed the serpent, Satan, that the seed of the woman would crush his head. However, this victory was not without cost, for the woman’s seed would receive a *bruised heel*.

I. Cross-Bearing

1. What is it to bear the cross?
 - a. Bearing a *cross* is not some heavy or grievous condition or unfavorable state (a personal loss, family tragedy, devastating illness, or such) in which one may find himself.
 - b. Bearing the cross is sharing with Christ the shame and suffering that attends His cross and nothing else. It is the emblem of His reproach that all who are His must bear.
2. Bearing the cross is required as the mark of discipleship. “*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:27; Matthew 10:38).
 - a. Following Christ will make one appear to be an outcast and criminal before the world because Jesus was (Matthew 11:6; Hebrews 13:12, 13).
 - b. Bearing the cross requires the believer to mortify his flesh, for self-preservation is the natural instinct of self. The Christian’s only concern must be the glory of Christ (Matthew 16:24, 25; Luke 9:23–25).

- c. Be careful because the flesh naturally shrinks back from cross-bearing (Hebrews 12:1, 2).
3. The true believer owns the cross as the acceptable sacrifice in the course of knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 2:2).

II. Jars of Clay

1. We are to follow the example of Jesus in His life and service because we represent Him, not ourselves in this world (2 Corinthians 4:5, 6).
 - a. We have the light and can see *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, but the world does not. Thus, as they refuse Him, they will also refuse us.
 - b. We must also remember that Jesus represents the greatest threat to human self-righteousness and supposed power to do right. Only sovereign grace opens the sin-blinded eye to the real truth of one's awful sinfulness and eternal danger (2 Corinthians 4:4).
2. We are to bear in our bodies the dying of Jesus.
 - a. What does bearing in our bodies the dying of Jesus look like (1 Corinthians 4:9, 10)? While Paul was referring to his own ministry as an apostle of Christ, the truth he spoke concerning himself is true of all believers, for Paul wrote, "*I urge you, then, be imitators of me*" (4:16).
 - b. Who would like to be regarded as the scum of the world? How, then, are we to respond? Again, Paul writes, "*We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things*" (1 Corinthians 4:13). Following the teaching and example of Christ, Paul said, "*When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat*" (4:12). That is what we, too, must do.

Conclusion

I never imagined I would see what our nation has experienced in recent days. I want to warn you that it may be that persecution lies around the corner. We are witnessing history repeating itself in our day (illustration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Germany under the Nazis').

When we are *exhibited like men sentenced to death*, slandered and treated like the scum of the world, we are to look to Jesus. We are to keep our eyes on Him, believe the promises of His Word, and hope in glory that will be revealed to us when He comes for us. May 2 Corinthians 4:7–18 encourage you.