

"Take Up The Cross"

By: William N. Hollis, B.S., N.A.

MARK 8:38: "And when he had called the people unto Him with his disciples also, He said unto them: Whosoever 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; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

On the wall in the living room of my home, hang two pictures of which I am very proud. I often find myself sitting in a comfortable chair opposite them, and as I sit there, my eyes will invariably fall upon them....gazing intently at every line.

One picture depicts a small band of early Christians huddled in the middle of a gigantic Roman arena. Above, in what appears to be the loges, or box seats, are the Roman leaders and dignitaries. In the panoramic space of the general admission seats, tens of thousands of the citizens of this once great empire, are waiting in this Colisium for the main event.

In the foreground of the picture, with manes bristling, teeth bared, and muscles taught....several lions are charging up from their pits for the Christian dinner, which awaits them. Thus the after dinner entertainment for the crowd which is packed on the long rows of white marble bleachers.

There is no look of anguish on the faces of these Christians. Only calm and resolution is evidenced there.

Their eyes are lifted up to the heavens, and they seem to be praying and singing. Many of the stories that I have read relating to these early persecutions have told of their singing religious hymns while the flesh was being literally ripped from their bodies by the hungry lions.

I like to believe that they are singing in this picture. If I listen intently, I can almost hear their voices blended together in this old time melody:

"I'm pressing on....the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
Lord plant my feet on higher ground."

In this adulterous generation of ours, how many would actually give their lives for their beliefs? How many feel that they would gain their life by loosing it?

Today, there abounds in our so-called Christian society a trend toward moderation in our religious beliefs. We have been taught not to discriminate in any aspect of our daily lives.

In all areas of our country, and particularly in our public schools and offices, **we are asked not to offend those who do not believe in Christ...by praying in His name.** My oldest daughter who was going to Bellaire High School at the time, came home one day, and asked me to help her concoct a "non-denominational prayer" to be given at her drama banquet. Her teacher had asked her to do this. I quickly told her that I did not know how to say a non-denominational prayer; that the Bible teaches us to pray in our Lord Jesus' name.

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She went to school the next day and told her drama teacher that she did not know how to give a non-denominational prayer; but that she could pray in the manner in which she was accustomed. He told her that would be fine, and that ended that.

Now our Supreme Court has handed down a decision, **which in effect, has ruled God out of the classroom. Christmas pageants are under attack** all over the country, and have been prohibited in most of our metropolitan school districts. Even nativity scenes in public places are one by one disappearing because of the hue and cry of this vocal minority of non-believers. Locally, **crosses are under attack** at Bear Creek Park.

Our public officials, for fear of loosing votes, will carefully select a minister who will not pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ as we are instructed to do. I have observed this for years, since I have always taken more than a passing interest in politics.

Some years back when the then President Eisenhower came to speak at Rice University, I took my oldest daughter to see and hear him. On the way out I explained to her how politicians were about not wanting to offend anyone for fear of loosing votes. To prove my point, I told her that I would bet her that on the podium with Ike would be a Protestant minister, a Catholic priest, and perhaps a Jewish Rabbi. I said that if only the two Christian ministers were there, that neither one would pray in Jesus' name. I said that if so, it would prove that they were selected for this reason so that they would not offend anyone.

Well, I was exactly right, as I knew that I would be. There was a priest and a protestant minister, and **neither one prayed in Jesus' name.**

When the Atheist from Moscow came to visit our country, and was entertained by representatives of our government...**they did not say grace at the table lest it offend him.** A table provisioned by taxpayers' money.

Former Governor Pat of California stated publicly that a person's religion, or rather the lack of it, should not be a qualification for public office. Sure enough, many Christians must have believed him, because his son Jerry was also elected Governor of this mighty state.

In the halls of the United Nations there is nothing to remind one of Almighty God, the creator of this magnificent universe. Yet this building is on our soil, and was paid for largely by our own people.

The Young Women's Christian Association no longer requires applicants to state their religious preference. Both the **YWCA, and the YMCA** have become a haven for homosexuals, lesbians, and other sex deviates. The chapels in most of their buildings have long since been removed and **they are no longer any semblance of a Christian organization.**

There is legislation already enacted that forces an employer to be indiscriminate in his employment practices regarding race, color, religion, or sexual preference. A person's religion has been construed to mean also the lack of it.

This means then, that an employer can be forced to hire an atheist who is not bound by the same moral principles which a Christian practices, and therefore can actually compete unfairly against him by lying and cheating.

We are living in a nation, which boasts, among other things, that its people are governed by God's law, and not man's law. Yet there is rioting, pillaging, and plundering rampant in the streets throughout our land. Home-

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made bombs are being hurled from windows upon the heads of policemen below who are attempting to restore law and order. Millions of dollars of goods are being stolen from shops and stores after the buildings have been reduced to rubble.

Public officials of these areas parade to Washington, D.C. to obtain federal funds to compensate for these losses. Even on an international level when a non-Christian country like Israel invades another non-Christian country such as Lebanon, and almost completely destroys the city of Beirut, our government pledges billions of our tax money to rebuild it. And once more, Christians are made to subsidize sin and lawlessness.

You read daily of such scenes in India, Africa, Indonesia, Viet Nam, and other Godless countries of the world. Still this is happening in America. America the beautiful....where God has "crowned thy good with brotherhood....from sea to shining sea."

It seems as if almost everything that man seeks today, whether it be by force, agitation, or legislation, is in the form of some material gain.

The cry is for equality....material equality....social equality. You don't hear of any marches on Washington, or riots in Alabama for religious equality.

We all recognize that we are equal in the eyes of God. But this seems not to be enough.

Yet I am convinced that the preponderance of the people involved in these incidents throughout our land are professing Christians.

A Christian is a person who believes in Christ and practices His teachings. This does not mean to say that we do not err once in awhile. However, on the final day of reckoning, our deeds must somehow outweigh our lip service...and this is the final test to see how much of our debt to our Lord we have repaid.

Let us pause for a moment to consider the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. In **Romans 12:13-14** he said, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day...not in rioting and drunkenness....not in chambering and wantonness...not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Are we practicing the teachings of our Lord in deeds, or are we paying homage by lip service only?

Where is the teaching of Christ which tells us to go out and shut a man's business down because we want some fringe benefit of the company, or because he has hired a man that does not belong to a union.?"

Where is the New Testament scripture which gives us license to run trucks off of the road, kill and maim persons, bomb homes, turn over automobiles, harass, harangue, and cajole our fellowman for .75 cents per hour pay raise?

Where is the religious teaching that enables us to close a person's business because he chooses not to serve a particular individual or group?

Today men are blocking work projects with their own bodies; they put sand into the gas tanks of cars and trucks, they tie up telephone lines into a person's place of business, they block the doorways of the businesses with their bodies in what they call non-violent resistance, they grab picks and axes...and literally cut up housing

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projects which use non-union labor...violence...acts of violence carefully planned and executed all aimed at bringing either an individual or a company to its knees.

In **Matthew 5:16** Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." I ask the question, if these people who commit the above named acts of violence are Christians, what kind of a light beam are they sending to the world?

And in the 43rd and 44th verses, Jesus continued..."Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy...But I say unto you, Love your enemy...bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you."

These are the words of Jesus. If we profess to be Christians, then we must believe them. If we believe them...then we can't commit these sinful acts against our brothers!

"Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you," takes care of all of the above mentioned acts of violence. If we do not obey God's law; then we must surely be governed by man's law. God's law is constant...never changing. Man's law vacillates...it surges with the tide of emotions,...is forever changing.

The other picture adorning the wall in my living room is also a print. It graphically depicts the embarkation of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. The year is 1620.

They are huddled on the docks as they await the ship, which would take them to the new world. There are women and children. One woman is nursing a child. The men have Bibles in their hands, and their deep penetrating eyes are looking out across the dark and forbidding waters.

The tall one in the foreground seems to be the leader. He is reading from the Bible. As I listen intently...these beautiful words seem to drift down through the centuries...and I can hear them now. Firmly and with confidence he is saying, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside still waters... "

Yes, these early Christians loved their Lord. So much so, that they gave up everything...braving the perils of a tortuous ocean journey, savages, and starvation...just for the privilege of worshiping Him in the manner they chose. They truly denied themselves, to take up His cross and follow Him.

With their Bibles in one hand and their axes in the other, they literally carved out an empire...a Christian empire. A nation with room for all...regardless of origin.

A nation, which put its trust in God, and believed that true liberty, was God given and not government given.

So strongly did they believe this...that in the Declaration of Independence, they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. Is this not everything a man possesses?

Remember the words of Jesus Christ..."Whosoever shall save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, and the gospel's, shall save it."

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In this adulterous world of ours, where our government is paying by the head for illegitimate children, where the farmer has become dishonest because of crop allotments, subsidies, soil bank programs; where gross cheating is done on the Income Tax, where we are making workers dishonest for want of unemployment checks, where veterans lie and sign pauper oaths in order to receive free medical care at the V.A. Hospitals; where mass cheating is done on hospitalization claims, automobile claims, and physical damage claims; where social etiquette tells you to lie instead of being truthful regarding ones look or dress.; where it rewards you for telling on your fellow man who might be avoiding taxes; where, in offices throughout the land, secretaries are told to say "he's not in," when in fact...he is in; where an official of our government states publicly that it is proper for the government to lie to the people; where the bathing suits are getting trimmer, and the dresses are getting slimmer...where oh where, are those who will look you in the eye and say that lying is lying, cheating is cheating and stealing is stealing?

Short cuts, and expediency, and the lust for material gain, are taking a deadly toll of twentieth century Christians.

Are we a nation under God, when a person can't get elected to public office when he is frank and sincere? When, if he gives a forthright and honest answer to a problem...he is deemed a radical?

Or if he is a strong man of principle; but happens to be up in years, a little plump and somewhat bald, is he not shoved aside and counted out because he lacks color and can't get the vote?

What manner of people are we? If we were to sit down this very day and tell our children or grandchildren about their rich Christian heritage...what could we tell them of our contribution? What cause have we championed recently? Or at all?

We are in perilous times. Times when the very lives of every Christian throughout the world are threatened. There is as little freedom and liberty in the world today...as there were in Patrick Henry's day. Day...by...day, the free world shrinks. Nation upon nation continue to fall into the fist of the Red Atheists. When this happens, the iron curtain is drawn around them, and darkness ensues. Liberty is lost.

Jesus tells us to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God what is His. We continue to render unto Caesar, and Caesar takes our treasures, and as in the parable of the mustard seeds, plants them consistently on rocky ground. He gives aid and comfort to the very people whose avowed objective is to place all of us into slavery.

Yet in areas where the ground is fertile...and the seed would germinate, producing a bountiful harvest...our government planteth not.

Do we have a representative government as we are told? If so, does it represent us? If it does, then it follows that we cannot be Christian!

However, if we are Christian, then we are denying Christ to let the proceeds of His love for us be spent on abortion clinics, unwed mothers, subsidizing tobacco, and the like.

In the Christian Life Magazine for November 1978, Tim Lahaye has an article on Homosexuality. In it he sums up just what we are talking about, therefore, I want to quote a portion of it to you.

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Christians are "the salt of the earth," but when salt has lost its "savor" (saltiness), it is worthless and fit only to be thrown out. During the past 50 years or so the Church of Jesus Christ has been lulled to sleep with the strange idea that the moral atmosphere of our Society is not its responsibility.

Consequently, atheistic humanist have had more influence on the moral climate of society than Christians. We believers have focused almost exclusively on "saving the world by preaching the Gospel," while humanists have gone about lowering standards. We said little as they lowered the waiting period for divorce...now we have one divorce for every two marriages. We said little when they abolished capital punishment...now we have become the crime capitol of the world. A few Christian "extremists" objected when humanism led the attack on clean literature, and now we are flooded with pornography. Objections to drugs, permissive sex and a host of other vices scarcely were heard even laws against homosexual activity were struck down and replaced with "consorting laws" so that homosexuals could freely practice their favorite form of perversion "in private."

A poem by J.G. Holland sums up our needs today: "God give us men...a time like this demands strong minds...great hearts...true faith and ready hands;"

"Men whom the lust of office does not kill; men whom the spoils of office cannot buy...men who possess opinion and a will...Men who have honor, men who will not lie.

"Men who can stand before a demagogue and criticize his treacherous flatteries without winking. Tall men, sun crowned, who live above the fog in public duty, and in private thinking...

For while they rabble with their thumb-worn creeds, their large professions and their little deeds, singled in selfish strife, lo freedom weeps...wrong rules the land, and waiting justice sleeps..."