

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

By: David McDonald

As we move from late May to early June, across our nation colleges and high schools celebrate students who have achieved whatever it is that organization has required for them to graduate. Graduation cannot be seen as an end, whether it is from pre-kindergarten (yes they even have those now), to kindergarten (yes even those) to sixth grade (yes...) to high school, to an AA, a BA, a MA, or even a Ph.D. Graduations which are seen as an end do injustice to the doors they open to one's future. Graduation is all about opening more doors.

The doors of life are many. The journey we call life is filled with many opportunities and obstacles. Both opportunity and obstacle have a way of becoming either positive or negative based on how an individual handles them. The greatest journey we are all on is the journey we take, the path we walk as we live our Christian lives. Jesus stated, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"* (Lk. 9:23).

The most important graduation we all will experience will be the one from this mortal body to an immortal eternal body. It is an eternity in heaven that we must spend this life pursuing. Taking up our cross involves taking on those hardships, making them opportunities, and those opportunities with the right frame of reference. The reference we must have, to be one of Jesus' is that of self-denial and humility. It may be hardship, obscurity, persecution and dishonor in a world that knows not our Lord and Savior that we must live. If any of those constitute our cross, then we must take up that cross and bear it with a joy and a peace that only a Christian can know.

As Christians move from one phase of life to another, whether that phase is a school graduation, a life change such as marriage, or having children, or grandchildren, or retirement, or any of a number of significant life changes, each one brings with it a number of crosses. It is up to us to bear those crosses in as much the same way that we can as our Savior did as He bore His for us. He bore that physical cross and mental cross in a way that allowed Him to serve as a sacrifice for each one of us. We must bear our crosses in ways that glorify Him. To do anything less is to deny Him. Rather than deny Him, deny yourself, live sacrificially each and every day in a way which allows your Christian light to shine and glorify our Creator and Savior. Take up your cross. Follow Him through every door.

(Selected from Lakeside Church of Christ, Orange Park, FL)