

THE COST OF CONVICTIONS

KEY VERSE: *"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."—Mark 8:34*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Mark 8:27-34*

OUR LESSON BEGINS with Jesus and his disciples on the way to Caesarea Philippi, when our Lord asked the disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27) They answered that some said, 'John the Baptist', others 'Elijah the prophet', and still others said, 'one of the Prophets'. Each of the answers honored him, but each was incorrect.

Jesus then asked the disciples directly, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter was quick to reply, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:15,16) Although Peter

spoke the truth, he obviously did not understand the full meaning of his answer, as the next verses illustrate. After Jesus began to teach them that he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the Law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again, Peter began to rebuke him saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." (vs. 22) This indicated how far the disciples were from discerning Jesus' part in the plan of God. Jesus "turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me. Satan: thou

art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."—vs. 23; Mark 8:33

When Jesus had called the people to him, with his disciples also, he said to them, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Mark 8:34) He also said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27) Just what is this reference to 'denying self' and 'crossbearing'?

The Lord's crossbearing consisted in the doing of the Father's will under unfavorable conditions. This course brought upon him the envy, hatred, malice, strife and persecution of those who thought themselves to be God's people, but whom our Lord, who read their hearts, declared to be of their father, the Devil. Since we are now following the Master in the same narrow way that he walked, we may expect that our crosses will be of a similar kind to his—opposition to our doing the will of our Father in heaven, and op-

position to our serving his cause and letting the light shine out as our Master and leader directed.

Crossbearing is closely related to self-denial, and yet a distinction between them may be noted. Self-denial relates more particularly to passive obedience and endurance for the Lord's sake. Crossbearing has to do more especially with activities in the LORD's service, which we find to be contrary to our natural inclinations. Faithfulness in self-denial means courage and zeal. Crossbearing means victory and overcoming. Our self-denials may be victories in our own hearts, of which others may know nothing, and of which they should know nothing, if we desire to have the fullness of the LORD's blessing. Our crossbearing, however, may be seen to some extent by those who are in close contact with us, and especially by those who are walking in the same 'narrow way'. —Matt 7:14

May each prove worthy to hear those words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matt. 25:21 ■