

# GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



## GIG212 – Experience Your Beliefs

Welcome to the podcast. I am excited about this today. I have been talking quite a bit in the last several podcasts about this idea that we must take up our cross and follow after the Lord. I want to read, just as a refresher, or for those of you who have not heard any of those podcasts, the basic Scripture for it, which begins in Luke the ninth chapter with verses 22-23. “‘The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.’ And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’” Matthew 10 also addresses this in verse 38, where it says, “‘And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.’”

This is a very interesting concept about the Cross of Christ. He is saying that we as believers in His crucifixion, in the salvation work of Christ on the Cross, must take up this cross daily and follow after the Lord. Now it says, “Take up his cross,” which would mean his or her cross, speaking to those who are listening. And sometimes I think people get confused because they think there is a different cross, or that we each individually have our own cross; and it is important to realize that that is not what He is addressing. There is no other cross than His. We take up this Cross, His Cross, daily, and follow after Him. So, it brings up the issue or the problem of saying, “Well, since the Cross was over 2,000 years ago, how do we today as believers follow in obedience to what He is saying in the Gospel of Luke and in the Gospel of Matthew, to take up our cross, to take it up daily and to follow after Him?” It seems like that is an unreasonable request. It seems like it is an impossible request to fulfill, because the event has already happened. But I think what we have to recognize and lay hold of in our faith is the fact that, number one, when the Lord directs us to do something, then it is possible to do. Now, maybe it is not possible to do through any means we may relate to on our own, or in a natural level, but it does not mean that it is impossible. There are events which are spiritual, mystical if you want to call them that, revelations; things that God gives us by the Holy Spirit’s work to allow us to experience that which we need to in our walk with God.

I believe this is an important concept, because it is one of many things that we as believers must really come to grips with – that there is a way to experience what we believe. There is a way to experience things that seem impossible to go back to because they are historical events, and how do you rerun history? But there is a way to experience that which has happened in history without us having to rerun the movie. So, we must understand that we walk by the Spirit, we have the Holy Spirit, and there are ways in which the Lord has granted for us to be able to do what we need to do; and I believe that it is necessary for us to be able to experience our beliefs. Now I am going to say that again: I believe there are ways we are able to experience our beliefs. I do not think it is enough to say we believe, or enough to say that we have faith, and feel like we have accomplished what God is looking for; in fact, it creates a great deal of passivity in our walk with God. It certainly does not lend itself to our growing and maturing in God, if all we are able to do is say, “Well, I have faith for that,” or, “I believe that that happened. I believe in that.” It is like saying, for instance, “I believe that I can ride a bicycle.” Great. Can you ride a bicycle? “Well, I believe I can ride a bicycle.” But have you ever ridden a bicycle? You have to experience

that belief. At some point, there is a tremendous difference in having the ability, or having the experience, of riding a bicycle, and simply standing there saying, "Well, I believe that it is possible. I believe that I could. I believe that I might."

A lot of times, I think this is a difficulty that people run into with their faith in their relationship with the Lord. Because, gosh, I cannot recall how many times I have heard people say, "I have a problem of faith. I don't have enough faith, I don't have enough faith." And I think sometimes what people are really expressing is the fact that they have not been able to experience that faith or do what that faith is about. "I have faith in healing." All right, have you been healed, or have you experienced healings? Have you ministered healing? "Well, no, but I believe in healing." Well, that is great, but at some point we need to experience it. And I think this is part of what Christ was saying to us when He was saying that we must take up our cross daily and follow Him. At some point, that Cross must be an experience to us. Not just to kind of stand at arms distance and say, "Yes, I believe that Christ was crucified on the Cross. I believe that that was to remove my sin. I believe that He gave me salvation through His experience of being on the Cross." Yes, it is wonderful that we can be believers, and when we read through the Scriptures, there are many things that we see are the blessing of believing. But I think that we have to go beyond that idea of just believing, or having faith in something. And I think it is why many people's walks with God are really weak and they run into a lot of problems; because, again, it is like riding the bicycle – to know I can jump on that bicycle and ride it, I have done it before. I know I can ride that bicycle at any time I need to, anytime that I want to; I can do that. It is not a matter of standing back, looking at the bicycle, and saying, "I believe that I could." Well then, part of what we have to do is learn to do. And I think the real purpose of faith is for us to progress from faith into the works or the experience that we are to have because of the faith, because of the belief that we do have.

I believe this is part of what Christ was trying to get across to the disciples when He said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me." If we are going to truly have a relationship with Christ, with the Father, if we are going to have what we term a walk with God, then we have to not be standing back, saying, "Well, I believe I could walk with God daily." No, we have to do it. And to do that, we have to experience the Cross. The reality of the Cross has to be ours, and we have to be able to say, "I know the Cross, because I have visited the Cross. I have experienced what Christ experienced on that Cross with Him. I watched Him as though I were standing at the foot of the Cross, embracing it as He was suffering upon it." It has to be that real of an experience, just like the difference of saying, "I believe I can ride a bicycle," and getting up and riding it. Do not say, "Well, by faith I take up my cross daily and I follow Him." No, He did not say to take it up by faith. He said, "Deny yourself, take up the cross, and follow Him." So I believe it is something that we are able to experience. I know this is a different concept for people, especially people who do not really experience the reality of a prayer life or waiting upon the Lord, meditating upon the Word, and meditating upon the things of God, so that they come alive to us in a true spiritual experience. And I think that beyond the Cross, there are other things we as Christian believers are to experience.

I believe it is important, so I would name a few of these experiences that I think are important for us; because as we go along in future podcasts, I would like to try to see if we can help move into the enabling to move through our faith into experiences. I believe we should experience the shame and suffering of Yeshua before the Cross. I am using this example because I think a lot of times people disassociate Him hanging on the Cross and dying from what just preceded the Cross. Number one, you could go back to the Last Supper and realize that He experienced being rejected by Judas and then betrayed. I think sometimes we need to see how the impact of that experience was on Christ, that He

was not just rejected by Judas because of His not becoming king, but He was also turned over to the Romans by him. And so, that experience of being betrayed by your deepest, dearest brother or sister is an experience that was very real to Christ. And He went from that betrayal into the shame and the suffering of His trial, being beaten and whipped, being spat upon, being jeered at. All that went along with the activities leading up to the Cross itself I think must be real to us, and we must see really what Christ as our Messiah suffered through these events. We have to feel them, not just say, "I believe He went through that. I have faith that He suffered." No, we have to feel, we have to experience that feeling, that shame that He experienced prior to the Cross. We, of course, have to, as He is saying, take up the cross daily. We have to experience His death and pain on the Cross.

I think we need to experience His death. There is a difference between Him hanging on the Cross and the events prior to His death, and what He went through in death of giving His spirit into the hands of the Father. But He died as a human would die, and He was buried following that death. What was it for Him to be buried? I personally want to experience to the depth that burial experience that Christ went through. He was dead and buried. He went through what every human goes through upon their death. That does not mean nothingness, that means a soul that lives on. In the context of the Hebrews of the time, the individual would go to Sheol. What were the experiences that He went through? We know that for Christ, they were very unique, and they were very important for what transpired later. Did He descend into the depths of the earth, and then speak to the souls that had died prior to His death on the Cross? It would be very interesting to experience Him speaking to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, to every soul that had passed in death from Adam to the time of the Cross. Every dead person, I believe, was engaged by Yeshua upon His death and during the time of His burial.

Think about it – what would those moments mean to hear, to see, to observe, to experience in some way? To understand what He experienced – not only what He experienced, what He did during that time period. We talk about what He did on the Cross; what did He do following the Cross? It was very important to the resurrection of those souls. It would be important for me. I would love to experience the moment of Yeshua's resurrection from the dead, that moment of resurrection, the power of God being released in Him to end death. We say we believe in resurrection life, we believe in life after death, we believe in eternal life; but to experience the moment of the happening, this to me is all part of the Cross. When He says, "Take up the cross," for me, all of these experiences are wrapped into the one event of the Cross. But they are also very individual moments that were a part of what transpired at the Cross, just prior, during, and after.

To see, to feel the resurrection from the dead and the exiting of the grave with Messiah would be tremendous. To experience His resurrected ministry following His resurrection – after exiting the grave, He ministered for a time period to the disciples, and to the world. There were many who saw Him resurrected. That is why, when people say, "Well, I have a hard time believing"; there were so many firsthand witnesses that actually witnessed the fact that He was crucified, and witnessed the reality of His resurrection following His exiting of the grave. And He ministered, providing for us, really, that firsthand witness in ministry of those who saw it, who experienced it. But I would like to likewise experience those days that He had on the earth, following His resurrection in His resurrected form and body.

I think we need it. It is part of our faith. It is something we say we believe in, but is it just like kind of foggy to us how that all worked, and what it means to believe in that? I think we should have way more of a touch and an experience. And just as He says, "Take up the cross daily," I think we should take up

the reality of His death, His burial, His resurrection, so that they are as experiences to us that we have connected with, even if it is by a deeper and deeper revelation through the Holy Spirit. We need the experience and the reality that He was resurrected, and moved on the earth, and moved in ministry, following that resurrection in a glorified body, in a resurrected body. Let's put it that way, so that people do not have something to argue over. He was in a resurrected body prior to His glorification going to the Father. But along with that, I think we should experience His Ascension. I think it should be real to us, His Ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, receiving His glorification as the Son of God, as the Messiah. I believe we should know and experience that reality. Beyond that, I think we should be able to experience the beginning of His ruling and reigning as Lord and Christ, Lord and Messiah, in the heavens, that precede His return to this earth. So, I am just sharing with you what my drive is, born out of this idea that we take up our cross daily, that there is a way after these events have transpired to experience them. I think we are supposed to experience them. I think there is provision for us to experience them.

Before we are done, I want to just give a few Scriptures to help us grasp this ability. I will begin with Romans the sixth chapter, starting at verse 3. "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" See, baptism is supposed to be a means by which we can experience something. You say, "Well, I was baptized." All right, but was the faith there which really triggered this beyond a belief into an experience for you? Was there something of an experience that maybe we should have had, maybe we missed? Maybe we should go back by faith and recapture the moment of this baptism that is being expressed here of what we should really receive out of it. We have been baptized into His death. See, we have been baptized into the death that He died; the time of the grave, that is what we were baptized into. And this baptism is supposed to be more than a sacrament that we participate in on a religious level. It is supposed to be something that is life-changing, and an experience in our lives that lets us be with Him in death.

Verses 4-7. "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism." See, we can experience His death. We can experience His burial through this baptism into His death, "So that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." So there it is. We were supposed to not only experience the death, not only experience the grave, but we were also to experience His being raised, His being resurrected from the dead through the glory of the Father, to witness the glory of the Father resurrecting Him, so that we too might walk in newness of life. Just as He came out of that grave and walked in a resurrected body, we likewise are to experience newness of life. "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin." When I read this, I do not get the idea that this is supposed to be a matter of just faith or belief. It is saying that these are to be experiences that we were to have in this baptism that was opened up for us to go through.

Verse 8, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." So, we have died. We do not have to believe that we died with Christ – we were supposed to die with Him experientially. We were to experience that death, and through that death, we then are able to believe. See, I think, again, that is why people have trouble believing or having faith in certain things, because there is not enough of a follow-through experience in the prerequisites, or the precursors, to what we are believing for. So, "we shall also live with Him." We are going to live with Him through eternity; and our ability to

believe that we will live with Him through all eternity is based on the fact that we have died with Him and we have come forth in His likeness to walk in the newness of life that He has provided for us.

Let's go on to verses 9-13,

Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so [or we can say, "Just like that"] consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those **alive** from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

See, we are to be alive from the dead. We are not to go on sinning; how do we go on sinning if we have died to sin? I think, for me, it brings out problems that we see in Christianity, and people struggling to really be faithful to what they believe should be the quality of the walk with God that they have, because they are still struggling with sin, struggling with the flesh, struggling with their faith and belief. Why? Because there is not enough experience. There is not enough of a reality that you have experienced following through what you believe, what faith you have. I am not trying to take away your faith. I just believe that faith is something that enables us to move on into experience. Faith leads to works, and without works faith is dead. So, when we do not move into working through the experience of what God is talking about, what the Word is talking about, we see that faith becomes dead. And we will get into that probably in another podcast. But I bless us to see that what we are supposed to experience, born out of the fact that He is even using the example of the Cross, that we take up the Cross daily, I think we are to experience all of these things. And so, we not only were to believe, as Christians, but what is the next step? Oh, that is right, baptism. What is the point of baptism? It is to take all that you believe and have it manifest in your life as an experience. It must be that we are Christians experientially, not just by faith. So, we are going to focus on this.

I bless this. I ask you to pray over it and see that this idea of baptism is something that we are to literally be immersed into experientially in our hearts, minds, and spirits by the Holy Spirit, as part of our walk with God. And I believe God to make this not only real to us, but I believe for it to begin unfolding to us, that all of these events we believe Christ felt and experienced, we also follow Him by faith into those experiences. I believe for it and pray for us all to have this become more and more real to us daily.

Amen.