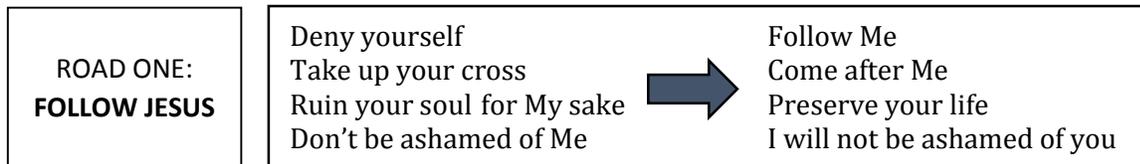


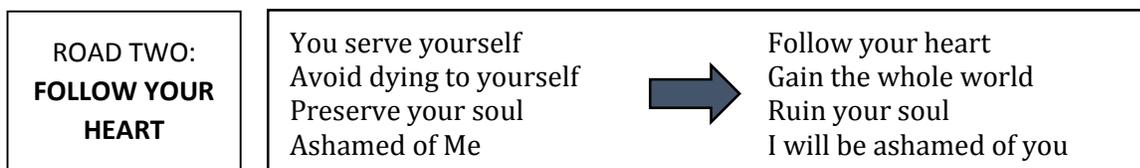
If the Christ is the Loser King, rejected by the world, with no reputation but fool and enemy in this world, what does it mean to follow Him? If Jesus is worth it, then He is worth the rejection, the hatred, the loss of my reputation and my power in this world. To follow Him means losing in this world, losing my preoccupation with my own significance because His greatness and His beauty fills my eyes. But, let it be known that following this Christ means losing. It means death to your reputation. The King on a Cross leads disciples carrying crosses of shame and powerlessness and rejection because their hope is in God, not in man. Jesus is life, and nothing else compares.

1. Following Jesus Means Repudiating Your Own Life

- a. Then let him deny himself
  - i. What does it mean to deny one’s self?
    - 1. “to deny” means to repudiate, to disown one’s self
    - 2. It means to consider that you don’t belong to yourself any longer
  - ii. It is further expressed by the second clause
- b. take up his cross daily (throughout the day)
  - i. Jesus is saying that if you want the Christ, then you must accept the shame, the loss, the reputation that comes with Him
  - ii. Thus, the cross was not the throne that any king would assume to reign from, it was the exact opposite!
    - 1. Not a sign of power, but of helplessness
    - 2. Not a sign of authority, but of shame
    - 3. Not a sign of righteousness, but of guilt
    - 4. Not a sign of honor, but of shame
  - iii. To come after Him, He must come first, before your power in this world and your good name in this world and your success in this world
- c. There are two roads that can be taken, which lead to two different destinations



OR



2. Building Our Reputation in the World Leads to Soul Ruin

- a. “Because” – The cause of the previous commands are rooted in a truism, the reality that pursuing and preserving your soul in one way actually results in the ruin of one’s soul in another (and greater) way
- b. We have two kinds of ruin and two kinds of salvation here
  - i. To save your name in this world, to protect your power and reputation means that your soul suffers ruin
  - ii. To ruin your name in this world, to lay down your power and reputation on account of Jesus means your soul is alive
  - iii. This is simply true, as we will see, it is not a command to ruin your soul or preserve your soul: the command is to deny your self, take up your cross daily, and follow Jesus
- c. The question at hand is: what do you depend upon to make you somebody, and what road are you following in order to find it?
  - i. This is a warning: If you depend upon anything else to bring life, to fulfill your soul, to make you somebody, then you will lose your soul

- ii. If you consider your identity a loss for this world, bearing the shame of His Christhood, then you find that your soul is really alive
- iii. Jesus uses the word "soul" or "psyche" rather than the usual word for life (*bios, zoe*)
  - 1. Thus, we see that "ruining one's soul" is to "take up his cross" and is not merely a physical call to martyrdom, but rather a spiritual call to entrust your *identity* to Him
  - 2. This entrusting oneself results in following Him wherever He leads, even if to total loss in this life because your real identity, your real foundation, your real life is not based upon your performance, your treasure, your family, your comfort, but is built upon Him and Him alone
  - 3. Thus, Jesus is preparing His disciples to lose in this world because His Kingdom is not of this world but is eternal and real and true and so much greater – the way it is supposed to be
    - a. He is reversing the curse, undoing the threads of what we thought to be real and important
    - b. He is calling us to total and complete allegiance to Him because He is worth it and entrusting everything to Him is real life – everything else is a cheap imitation, a charade that will fade to oblivion when He returns

### 3. Only Reliance Upon Jesus Gives Your Soul Rest

- a. Your old way of identity, of what you rely upon to make you live, has to die and through Him giving you a whole new identity, a new foundation of life, of what you rely upon to bring life
  - i. This is why the cross is taken up daily in Jesus' words - because a new identity is lived out every day and the death of the old identity is lived out every day
- b. What do people depend upon to give them a true Self?
  - i. Eastern: deepest consciousness of enlightenment in Buddhism is that you lose all sense of self, of individuality, of personhood - you merge into all things
    - 1. The Eastern way to peace is to lose the sense of self-awareness
    - 2. Jesus didn't say that we merely lose our self, but rather that we lose our self to rescue our self, and this *for his sake*
    - 3. Thus, the identity, or self, that Jesus is talking about is not the Eastern idea of Brahman/Atman or oneness with all things at all, because you do get a sense of self, a renewed self, an individual following Christ Jesus with deep personal significance and participation
  - ii. Western: Find yourself, be true to yourself, look into yourself, and this is the main point of existence - find out who you are, what you really want, and worship it :)
    - 1. There's a lot of problems with that - a lot of your deepest desires are conflicting, so which is the real you? Which ones are you supposed to pursue and please if they are opposed?
    - 2. What happens when your deepest desires change? When your sense of self is tied to your deepest desires, then you have a major identity crisis.
    - 3. Morally, what if your deepest desires involve my untimely demise? Is the pedophile righteous in his pursuit of his deepest desires? This view of personhood and self, and its approval as what it means to be human, leads to some devastating conclusions on morality and ethics.
  - iii. Jesus is not talking about this sense of self, either, even through it seems like he is pointing us towards saving our souls, or finding ourselves
    - 1. He is saying that the only way to truly save oneself is to truly serve Him, to die to finding yourself, and fix your eyes upon Him
    - 2. You'll never find out who you really are by trying to find out who you really are, because you're still only seeking yourself
- c. Those who are willing to lay down their preoccupation with and therefore reliance upon proving one's significance in order to gain Christ will find that they see the Kingdom of God
  - i. When Jesus is the soul's deepest desire, the soul finds its secure and unshakable joy, peace, and rest because Jesus is unshakable and always delivers on his promise
  - ii. Only Jesus forgives you when you fail Him by sheer grace, and only Jesus will never fail you

4. We Naturally Try to Find Significance and Self-Worth by Gaining the World
  - a. We look for benefit, and that isn't bad
    - i. What does it profit (benefit) a man?
    - ii. But we look for it in all the wrong places
  - b. We believe that by gaining the world, we can find peace for ourselves
    - i. if he gains (gain by investment) the whole world (saves his life)
    - ii. This the normal way that we seek to be somebody, to find significance, to find soul rest
    - iii. We seek to "gain the world" - to get something from the world that we believe makes us something
      1. "You're nobody unless..."
        - a. ...you are a good parent
        - b. ...you are a moral citizen
        - c. ...you care about the poor
        - d. ...you work hard
        - e. ...people are pleased with you
        - f. ...you deny yourself
      2. You try to gain these things so that you have a sense of self, a sense of worth, that you are somebody
        - a. Particularly if we gain these things *and other people notice them and call us "good"*
  - c. This never actually works, but rather ruins the soul
    - i. Even the whole world cannot save your soul, cannot give you a stable self, an identity.
    - ii. If you build your life upon anything in this world, it will fail you and this instability destroys your soul, enslaving you in fear and anxiety, *for you were not meant to be satisfied with this world but in the One for whom you were made to know, to love, and to trust in worship*
    - iii. When you don't receive vindication that you are a good parent, or moral citizen, or hard worker, etc. you don't merely feel unhappy, you feel like your very self is falling apart, *because it is!* You tried to save your soul and you are losing it! It's horrific!
  - d. "If you lose your self for my sake, you will have a rescued self"
    - i. If you build your life upon the person of Christ Jesus, His powerful works, and His glorious words of life, then your self is unshakeable, unailing, cannot be lost or ruined or destroyed.
    - ii. You'll finally have a true self, the way you were made to be - you were built to know him.
    - iii. This is the Truism underneath the command
5. Fearing the World Instead of Clinging to Christ is a Sign of Someone Who Doesn't Really Know Christ Jesus
  - a. Whoever may be ashamed of me and my words
    - i. "ashamed" is to be so afraid of what the world gives you or keeps from you that you hide in their ranks so as not to stick out
    - ii. It is to side with the idols, the goats, and the self-dependent out of fear that you will not gain the whole world and therefore not be somebody
      1. To preserve our life, we seek to gain the world, and this results in a soul ruin
      2. To preserve our life and gain the world, we are ashamed of the Loser King, we hide from the world's ridicule in order to gain the world, and thus we hide in the crowd when He is hated, scorned, and ridiculed
        - a. We remake Him in the world's image so that he is acceptable, to save our consciences because we are ashamed of who He truly is
        - b. He judges the world, but we find that this offends people, so we "soften" him up
        - c. He proclaims that sin will destroy and is unacceptable for a child of God, but this offends people, so we hide that part of him
        - d. He tells us that we cannot perform well enough, that our only hope is to fall on our faces and entrust ourselves solely to His work, but we find that people don't like this so we add a few sprinkles of attainment that we can throw in the recipe to ease their rejection

3. Preserving your soul by gaining the world out of the fear that losing the world's favor to cling to Christ Jesus will cost you
- b. The Son of Man (glorious power/authority) will be ashamed of this one
  - i. "This one" who counts himself with the enemy out of fear of the enemy
    1. The Lord will count this person with the enemy because he has sided with the enemy
  - ii. whenever he may appear
    1. in the glory of Him
      - a. and of the Father
      - b. and of the holy angels
    2. This is the language of the Christ's judgment of the world – see what you really want and really entrust yourself to, lest you find yourself on the side of the enemy when He returns in judgment
      - a. Acts 17:31
- c. The Kingdom of God is arriving soon, and some would see it, thus there is a promise and an encouragement of hope

#### 6. Where Do We Find the Power to Do This?

- a. The only way that we can change our identity is by an experience of God's mercy through the Christ who suffered, died, and was raised again *for me*.

"When I come to the Lord after I've blown it, I've only one argument to make. It's not the argument of the difficulty of the environment that I am in. It's not the argument of the difficult people that I'm near. It's not the argument of good intentions that were thwarted in some way.

I come to the Lord with only one appeal; his mercy. I've no other defense. I've no other standing. I've no other hope. I can't escape the reality of my biggest problem: me! So, I appeal to the one thing in my life that's sure and will never fail. I appeal to the one thing that guaranteed not only my acceptance with God, but the hope of new beginnings and fresh starts. I appeal on the basis of the greatest gift I ever have or ever will be given.

I leave the courtroom of my own defense, I come out of hiding and I admit who I am. But I'm not afraid, because I've been personally and eternally blessed. Because of what Jesus has done, God looks on me with mercy. It's my only appeal. It's the source of my hope. It's my life. Mercy! Mercy me!"

-Paul David Tripp, *Whiter Than Snow*

- b. It is not that I can find peace in my soul based upon anything else but His mercy. And this is not an act of the will, a mere choice to be different.
  - i. I cannot say, "I should build my life upon God" without a deep understanding of His mercy towards me in Christ, that all I can stand upon is His merciful work and Christ's atoning death and gift of righteousness to me.
  - ii. I am tempted to switch foundations for my identity from one idol to another, all of which equally fail, but when I see the Lord of Glory crucified for my sins, the love that will not let me go, the mercy that runs deeper than all my sins, THEN I find peace with God.
- c. We cannot push out an old affection by merely willing it to go away and willing ourselves to entrust our very souls to the Lord.
  - i. The only way that we will give up our name in this world, to ruin our soul for this world, is to see the great value of Jesus so that our hearts are wooed by an ever greater affection for Him

"The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be

prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy?

If the throne which is placed there must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may not leave a bosom which would rather detain him than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure His willing admittance, and taking unto himself His great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it?

In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away and all things are to become new.

To obliterate all our present affections by simply expunging them, and so as to leave the seat of them unoccupied, would be to destroy the old character, and to substitute no new character in its place. But when they take their departure upon the ingress of other visitors; when they resign their sway to the power and the predominance of new affections; when, abandoning the heart to solitude, they merely give place to a successor who turns it into as busy a residence of desire and interest and expectation as before - there is nothing in all this to thwart or to overbear any of the laws of our sentient nature - and we see how, in fullest accordance with the mechanism of the heart, a great moral revolution may be made to take place upon it. It is only when admitted into the number of God's children through faith in Jesus Christ that the Spirit of adoption is poured out on us, it is then and only then the heart, brought under the mastery of one great predominant affection is delivered from the tyranny of all its former desires and the only way that deliverance is possible...

...It is never enough to hold out to soul a mirror of its own imperfections, saying, 'Look how bad you are, Soul!'. It's not enough to speak to your conscience of its follies saying, "Look at your foolishness!" Rather, you must try every possible method of finding deep access to your heart for the love of Him who is greater than the world."

-Thomas Chalmers, *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*

- d. So, today – is He worth giving up everything that you rely upon to give your life meaning?
  - i. Luke 12:49-50
    - 1. Jesus took judgment-fire for you!
    - ii. The Christ who gave Himself up for His Bride?
    - iii. The Christ who made Himself poor that you might gain the joy of the Father and the Son and the Spirit's heavenly relationship?
  - e. There is a promise in this passage as well as a warning – heed both and entrust yourself to Christ Jesus, the King who bore your shame and calls you to suffer loss for His sake and find in Him the delight of your soul – real life – the way it is supposed to be.

It is only in seeing Jesus, the depth of His love for you and God's mercy through Him, that He is the only Master to follow that will never fail you or ruin you and if you should fail Him will always forgive you and draw near to you. Only then will you find true soul rest. Only when you see that He took your judgment upon Himself, for you, that you will be able to forget your self and deny your self and take up that cross by which your attitudes are brought under the mastery Him who rescued by breaking His own heart. He who, while our sins bore upon His soul, and the hammer crushed his bones by sharpened iron point, cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they don't understand what they're doing!" The One who *longed* to bear the fires of judgment for you rather than call them down from heaven upon you. When we see Him, really see Him as He is, we forget ourselves, our perceived need for attention, and our clamor for significance fades to silence in the glow of His great and glorious grace until all that we see is Him and our joy is made complete, our hope made stalwart in our ever-changing reputations, and our dependence

swells to the fullness of the knowledge of the Son of God by which we are transformed to truly be who we were meant to be. In your mercy, Lord Jesus, may it be.

### **Benediction**

**Ephesians 3:14-19** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.