

Matthew 16:21-28 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. ²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." ²⁴ ¶ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Yes Lord Jesus!

When I had the families here for the Black Hills Bible Camp, I gave them some instructions for dealing with rattlesnakes. Now I have no experience dealing with rattlesnakes. I have yet to see one in the wild but I shared with them what the people at Reptile Gardens share with visitors. First, that it is pretty unlikely to get bitten. There are only a couple of incidences here in Rapid each year. Of those that do happen, it is usually because the people, usually young males, have found one and are playing with it. They know this to be the case because the bites are on their hands or face. If a rattle snake bites you unawares, it will get you in the foot or the leg not the face or hands. They also point out there at Reptile Gardens that it is misconception that rattlers always rattle before striking. As they point out, what

animal do you know that takes orders from its butt? So what is the point? Watch out for rattlers! You won't always get a rattle warning and if you come across one, don't play with it. Locate the danger and slowly back away.

It is not just about rattlesnakes that men have misconceptions. They have them about something far more dangerous. Somehow they think that Satan will always announce himself in a horned red suit and rattling pitchfork where as Peter found out very clearly in our text, Satan often appears as angels of light. Even worse, Satan often works through us.

Peter loved Jesus. Peter cared for Jesus. Peter was acting in love for Jesus. But that is exactly what made this temptation so deceptive. Peter didn't have fangs and a pitchfork and horns protruding from his head. Peter had the best intentions for Jesus and Jesus' kingdom. But as the saying goes "the road to hell is paved with good intentions". Peter thought Jesus dying would mean the end of Israel's hopes of salvation. He thought it would bring an end to all that Jesus was working for. Of course, Peter was dead wrong. Jesus' death would bring about all that Jesus was working for, which Jesus was trying to point out to Peter, but because of Peter's ignorance and weakness and

clinging to worldly concepts, Peter becomes an instrument of Satan.

Rattlesnakes do not always rattle and neither does Satan.

Rattlesnakes do usually rattle because they don't want to bite you and they rattle to try to scare you off. Satan usually doesn't rattle his presence because he does want to bite you. He wants you, your faith and soul to die by actively or passively rejecting Christ. And one of the best ways for him to lead you down that path is through someone who loves and cares for you.

Have you ever said to someone "get behind me Satan". I have . I have said it to Meghan, usually when she makes something particularly delicious and calorie laden. But besides for the jokes, this really does happen -Satan encouraging you down a road that doesn't follow Jesus by the lips of someone who cares for you and thinks they have your best interests at heart. And on the other side. Have you ever been Satan's pawn encouraging someone down a path that you thought was right but actually took them away from Jesus not toward Jesus? I assure you in our ignorance and arrogance, just as Peter, we have. It doesn't matter how good our intentions are, or that it came from love. There are times that people should have said to each one of us "get behind me Satan".

How could that happen to us? How could it happen to Peter?

How could we when we have the best intentions encourage someone down such a bad road that we should be told "get behind me Satan"? Jesus gives the answer in our text. In our ignorance and arrogance, we are often not mindful of the things of God but of men. Peter had his own ideas about how Jesus should bring His kingdom into existence. Peter had his own fantasies about what being Jesus' disciple would bring him. Peter thought he knew what was best. Peter had still not learned to "Say Yes Lord Jesus". Remember a few weeks ago. Jesus had tried to teach Peter and the rest of the disciples with the feeding of the 5,000 to have child like faith that when Jesus said "you feed them" didn't say "how" but "how much". And then with the walking on water, Jesus tried to teach them again not to let their adult minds get in their way of child like faith that trusts Jesus Word.

Well, here in our text just two chapters later, Jesus is still trying to teach Peter and us about child like faith. Jesus says that He must suffer and die but on the third day He would rise again. Peter dares, because it doesn't fit with his conception of what God should do, to tell Jesus no and falls into Satan's trap and becomes an instrument of Satan. Child like faith says "yes Lord Jesus" even when, especially

when God's plans are different from what we want or imagine how God should work. Child like faith says "Yes Lord Jesus" because it knows and implicitly trusts that Jesus knows all things, Jesus is Holy, Jesus is gracious, Jesus is God and I am none of those things.

I remember when I was a kid, my dad made us kids take these huge nasty vitamin pills. They were so hard for me to swallow. I did not calmly and gladly say "Yes dad" and swallow them. Caught up in my world of knowing only how bad they tasted, I was sure that I would be better off not taking those things. The taste alone I felt could kill a child. When we follow Jesus, there will be many things that Jesus asks us to swallow that when we let our thinking and our conception of what is best for us and for God's kingdom get in the way will be difficult to swallow just as they were for Peter but when we, with child like faith, trust that Jesus knows all things, Jesus is holy and will do no wrong, Jesus is gracious and loves me, Jesus is God then with child like faith we will say "Yes Lord Jesus" and swallow it down happily.

The hardest and best thing we are to swallow down is the cross.
This is what Jesus is talking about when He says if anyone desires to come after me we must take up his cross and follow me. Our cross is Christ's cross. What is the thing that will bring you the most grief from

the unbelieving world? - Preaching Christ crucified. As Paul says, "the cross is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews". That is still true . The cross to the self righteous is a pill they won't want to swallow and will be angry with you for. I remember witnessing to a Jehovah's witness who had come to my door to witness to me. I told him that we aren't saved by our works but by the grace of God. He got really angry with me. When I referenced Ephesians "for by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourself it is the gift of God not of works lest anyone should boast.", he began stomping away yelling angrily at me that I didn't know anything and he had been studying the Bible a lot longer. It was funny but also not. Why was he angry? Because self righteous Pharisees still hate hearing that their sin is so great there is nothing they can do to atone for even for the tenth part of it. And those like the Greeks who pride themselves on their supposed intellect and reason still find the cross of Christ foolishness. Sam has a few times asked me for some help with friends who have been angrily ranting against the Bible. Why would they be angry at the Bible? How is that any skin off their teeth? Because they are kicking against the goads. Their conscience and nature testify to the existence of the almighty but that is a terrifying thought to those who have

rejected the gospel because it means they aren't in control and they will have to answer to God so they snarl and throw both rocks and words at us to try and silence anything that reminds them of that.

Preaching Christ Crucified, believing in the cross, gladly proclaiming it can and will bring you bitterness from the world. As millions of Christians have found over the millennium, carrying around that cross in this world might mean that you could lose earthly possession, earthly friends, even your earthly life. This is a bitter pill for us to swallow for us at times. and at times like Peter in weakness and ignorance we may fall into temptation when things don't go the way we think they should, when we let our adult mind, make us more mindful of the things of this world. And that is when we are most susceptible to being tricked by Satan and used by Satan to tempt others. But let us not as the passage says lean on our own understanding for that will always and only in the end lead to destruction but Holy Spirit causes us trust in the Lord with child like faith saying "Yes Lord Jesus". He brings salvation.

Truly Jesus knew what He was doing. He lost His life to gain it again. What life was that? He had eternal life before this world began. He had every glory and comfort. Why did He need to be born under the

law and the curse of the law and give up His life? Because He didn't have something that only His love and His death could buy - you? Christ became man and gave up His life that He might gain a life not where He was reconciled with the Father for He was always the Son worthy of all glory in the whom the Father is well pleased. He needed to give up His life to the wages of our sin and the condemnation of the law and pick it up again from death to gain a life where you are reconciled to God by the forgiveness of your sins. That is the life that He gained by giving up His holy perfect life in our place to which we by the Spirit declare "Yes Lord Jesus." Take up this cross, His cross and follow proclaiming "Yes Lord Jesus" all the way to heaven.

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