

## RADICAL DISCIPESHIP (LESSON 21)

THE DEATH PRINCIPLE. “When Christ calls a man,” says Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “he bids him come and die.” This is what Jesus meant by, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23). A reading of the previous verse helps to understand this principle. “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 the third day” (Luke 9:22). These words were spoken as Jesus’ ministry was drawing to a close. Jesus was revealing what His disciples could expect if they followed Him. The disciples had difficulty believing these words concerning Jesus, so it is not surprising they would have difficulty realizing the significance for themselves. It wasn’t until after their fiasco at Jesus’ crucifixion that they realized what He meant. And it wasn’t until the coming of the Holy Spirit that they were able to rise above their failure. Today we have the advantage of hindsight. We also have the Holy Spirit to help us understand Jesus’ words and to give us the power to follow Him in death. The Kingdom First Principle is a requirement for principle number two – self-denial. Jesus said we should not love our own lives more than we love Him. Here He gives a clear explanation as to what that means. “Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily...” The cross is the way of the Kingdom. The cross was a symbol of shame. The cross was an instrument of death. It was reserved for criminals of the worst sort.