

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 22)

THE DEATH PRINCIPLE (CONTINUED). In effect, Jesus told His disciples that following Him requires a daily willingness to die for Him if need be. "Taking up" the cross refers to the usual requirement of a condemned man to haul his own cross to the place of execution. Jesus knew (though the disciples were not yet aware) that He would soon be doing this Himself (John 19:16-17). Bruce states, "The King and Head of the church here proclaims a universal law binding on all His subjects, requiring all to bear a cross in fellowship with Himself." The second law of discipleship is a fellowship of death. It is a requirement for being a radical disciple. Bearing the cross assures that His disciples are always identified with the Kingdom. "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (II Timothy 2:11-12). The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily" (I Corinthians 15:31). He continually offered himself to the possibility of death. In explaining this verse William MacDonald paraphrases it: "Every day of my life I am exposed to death." In the passage Paul is teaching about the resurrection. He specifically was talking about those who were "baptized for the dead" (I Corinthians 15:29). They were stepping up and standing in for those who had been martyred. By public baptism they exposed themselves as Christ's disciples, while risking the possibility of arrest and martyrdom. Paul was a living example of the death principle. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand (II Timothy 4:6). According to Eusebius, Paul was beheaded during the reign of Nero. He lived daily with the knowledge of his own crucifixion with Christ. The death principle is the acceptance of death to self that frees a radical disciple to live or die for the Kingdom of God. The death principle is the cross principle.