

You follow me!

I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a number, one hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

I heard a sound from heaven, like the sound of many waters, and like the sound of a great thunder. The sound which I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. They sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, those who had been redeemed out of the earth. These are those who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed by Jesus from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. In their mouth was found no lie, for they are blameless. (Revelation 14:1-5)

The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:17)

So how does this relate to you and me? **What is our relationship** to the One who says to us, "You follow Me?"

Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:18-19 NAS95)

So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

My curiosity this week compelled me to check into comparing these two references to 'work' to see how they might relate to each other. After all, if I want to follow Jesus, it is very important to appreciate just how that works in my own life in very practical ways.

These are those who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed by Jesus from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb. (Revelation 14:4)

The first word in the Greek here translated work out your own salvation, is the word katargazomai. Strong's defines this as to work fully, accomplish, to finish, fashion, perform. This is a completely different word from the 'works' in the next verse referring to what God does inside of us. That word in the Greek is energeo: to be active, efficient, effectual, be mighty, show yourself. This energy from God is what is required to produce the outward fruit of the work mentioned in the previous verse.

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Then he said to them all, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23 NRSV)

What does the cross represent? Death to self; death to identity, ability, freedom, life on our terms.

To take up our cross has to do with **choosing to identify with Jesus fully** because **He identified with us fully**. That is **how we are set free** from the **power of sin** in our lives, because His death, identified as **He was with our identity**, defined the **death of our old false flesh identity** and **identity was left in His grave forever**, never again to have any **authority to define** us. This is key to understanding why we **choose to be baptized**, for baptism is **not a rite of passage** to get into a privileged group of insiders, but rather a **public declaration** that we are **no longer alive to sin** or the flesh but the life we now live is the **Son of God living through us**. This is **how Jesus lived** His life, with the life of His **Father living vicariously** through Him. We are offered the high **privilege of reliving the life of Jesus** by consenting daily to **consider ourselves dead to sin** and **alive to God** in Christ.

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? Therefore we have been **buried with him** by baptism into death, so that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father**, so **we too might walk in newness of life**. For if we have been **united with him in a death like his**, we will certainly be **united with him in a resurrection like his**. We know that **our old self was crucified with him** so that the body of **sin might be destroyed**, and we might **no longer be enslaved to sin**. For whoever has died is **freed from sin**. (Romans 6:3-7 NRSV)*

*So you also **must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus**. Therefore, **do not let sin exercise dominion** in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. **No longer present your members to sin** as instruments of wickedness, but **present yourselves to God** as those who have been **brought from death to life**, and **present your members to God** as instruments of righteousness. For **sin will have no dominion over you**, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that **if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey**, either of **sin, which leads to death**, or of **obedience, which leads to righteousness**? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have **become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching** to which you were entrusted, and that you, **having been set free from sin**, have become **slaves of righteousness**. (Romans 6:11-18 NRSV)*