A DIFFICULT ROAD TO TRAVEL

The road to the mountaintop runs through the valley. Not only was Jesus called to suffer, but those who followed Him would also pay a price. Jesus told His disciples, **"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life"** (Luke 9:22). They did not understand the full impact of these words, but Jesus told them the road ahead would be difficult. Even as He told them of His death, He told them of His resurrection. His life began with a miracle, and it would extend beyond the grave with a greater miracle.

There was a cross in the future for Jesus and for each of His followers. His cross was made of wood and was an instrument of physical death. Dying on it would have a redemptive effect upon all who would accept it. But to those who would follow Him, He said, **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it"** (9:23–24). When some people talk of their daily cross, they speak of physical afflictions or difficult situations. This is not the cross of which Jesus spoke. Followers of Christ are asked to choose to deal with issues of self-centeredness and self-determination. Accepting Christ and His way requires us to deny ourselves and our way. It is a difficult road to travel, because it is in our nature to save ourselves and to please ourselves. The call to follow Christ involves a willingness to lose ourselves in Him and for Him. Only then can we really save ourselves.

Our lives can be spent trying to **gain the whole world,** and in the process we can **lose or forfeit** our very selves (9:25). Many people have accumulated what would be considered "gain," but have lost more important things while doing it—things that could have brought meaning, fulfillment, and eternal reward. What they lost was far more valuable than what they gained.

Ken Heer, *Luke: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 366.