

“Hoisted on His Own Petard”

You may have heard our title phrase before (or not). You might even have an idea of what it means (or not). But probably only English Lit majors or fans of William Shakespeare recognize that it originates from Hamlet (Act 3, Scene 4, where Hamlet refers to Polonius being destroyed by his own plotting). A “petard” was a small explosive device typically used to breach gates or doors. Thus, to be “hoisted” (*raised*) on your own “petard” is to be blown up by your own bomb- to destroy yourself with something with which you intended to destroy something or someone else. It actually has nothing to do with flagpoles or ship’s masts as some have assumed and alleged. But the idea is actually biblical, sort of...

In John 19:17 we read, “*They took Jesus therefore; and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha; where they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.*” Obviously, the cross Jesus carried (until He was unable to do so and Simon the Cyrenian was “*pressed into service to bear His cross,*” Matt.27:32) was not “His” in the sense that He made it, just that it was made for Him. Nor did He ever intend to *hoist* or *raise* anyone else on it. So the similarity to “hoisted on his own petard” is limited to Him being *raised* or *hoisted* on “His” cross. But that’s not all...

In Matt.10:38 and Luke 14:27 (Mark 8:34 also actually), and well before Jesus’ crucifixion, He told *would-be followers* that they must “*take up/carry*” their “*own cross*” and “*follow*” Him in order to be His *disciples*. What we, on this side of Jesus’ crucifixion, sometimes fail to appreciate is that “the cross” at that time had absolutely NO SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE- it was ONLY a means of agonizing capital punishment. No one decorated their homes or places of worship with them, and certainly no one wore them as pieces of jewelry! And yet, Jesus said that in order to be *His disciple*, one must “*take up*” and “*carry his own cross*” and “*follow*” Him. Furthermore, He also added that such must be done “*daily*” in Luke 9:23! Now,

If we, wanting to be Jesus’ disciple(s), are willing to *look at* and *take up* and *carry* the implement of our *own physical destruction* each and *every day*, do you think we would become and be more *spiritually* minded? More *spiritually* dedicated? More appreciative of the fact that Jesus was *raised* on His *own cross* that we might have *spiritual* life?

Jesus *carrying* and *dying* on His cross may not be exactly the same as Shakespeare’s “hoisted on his own petard,” but it is oh so much more! And if we are willing to truly *follow* Him, even to our *own death* on our *own cross*, that too is oh so much more than merely being “hoisted on our own petard”! I’ll leave you with one final passage,

“*For Christ also died for our sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,*” 1Pet.3:18. Are you willing to *sacrifice* everything- even your own life, to be “*made alive in the spirit*” together with Christ in order to be *brought to God* eternally?

Hope so, because that is exactly what is required! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)