

DENYING SELF
Mt.16:24-27; Lk.9:23-25
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In our text which deals with things belonging to the character of true disciples of Jesus Christ:
 - a. There is mention of a most lofty goal and holy desire to be achieved: “to come after me,” and/or “follow me,” V.24.
 - b. There are two absolutely necessary conditions involved or two things one must do if one **will** or **wishes** to achieve that goal, or be successful in it, V.24:
 - (1) “Deny himself”
 - (2) “Take up his cross daily” (Lk.9:23)
 - c. There is revealed the bases upon which one either fails or succeeds in his disciples, and/or how sincere or how strong is his faith and his desire to follow Jesus, V.25. Cf. Jno.12:25.
 - d. V.26 explains the paradox (an apparent absurdity or contradictory statement) of the preceding V.25.
 - e. V.27 declares that the final judgment, at the 2nd Coming of the Son of man, would put things in their true light – it would show the value of self-sacrifice, and reveal the punishment of self-pleasing.
2. In our study of this and things belonging to the character of true disciples of Jesus Christ, we shall focus our attention mainly upon one of them, that of **SELF-DENIAL, OR DENYING SELF**, which Jesus demands of any person who “will (wishes) to come after” him or “follow” him, V.24.

II. DISCUSSION

A. 1ST NOTE WHAT JESUS DID NOT SAY.

He did not say “You are exempt from denying yourself and taking up your cross daily” if you:

1. Are a new convert, a babe in Christ.
2. Are a veteran disciple with many years of service to your credit.
3. Are retired from your secular job or unemployed.
4. Are a new-comer to the community.
5. Are either rich or poor.

6. Are “just a member” in the local church and not a preacher, elder, deacon, or a class teacher.
7. are holding a secular job that requires you to work long hours, or a job requiring shift work arrangement.
8. Are one whose spouse is not a Christian.
9. Are one whose children are very young, or, though old enough, have not yet obeyed the gospel.
10. Does not find it convenient to do so.
11. Have been, or think you have been, mistreated by some member of the church.

B. WHY IS SELF-DENIAL REQUIRED?

1. Because Jesus demands it of each and every person who wishes to be his disciple, V.24a. Cf. Heb.5:8,9; Lk.6:46.
2. Because it is necessary in order for one to lose and at the same time find his life for Jesus’ sake, V.25. Cf. Rev.2:10; 12:11.
3. Because of the disciple’s relationship to both God, the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, whose will is our law to which the disciple must voluntarily submit wholeheartedly.
4. Because by the self-sacrificing example of Jesus Christ whom we are required to imitate, 1Pet.2:21; 1Cor.11:1.
5. Because of our relationship to our fellow-men, and the God-ordained duty we owe them, without which we fail to serve the Lord, Mt.25:31-45 (emp.vv.40,45).

C. WHAT DOES SELF-DENIAL, WHICH JESUS REQUIRES OF THOSE WHO WISH TO BE HIS DISCIPLES, REALLY MEAN? WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

1. Remember: He is not asking us to deny ourselves of this or that “thing” – i.e., some material thing – but to deny **SELF**.
2. Similarly, Jesus is not asking us to deny ourselves of whatever is good and needful for strengthening our spiritual or physical life.

3. He is not binding or authorizing any form of asceticism or ascetic religious practices on us for any reason under any circumstances in order for us to be his disciples. See Col.2:20-23.
4. To deny **SELF** is to avoid something which has been described as a deadly spiritual cancer symptomatic of:
 - a. Self-will, the desire to be outside the law of obedience, i.e., above the responsibility to obey, or to submit.
 - b. Self-interest, to desire to be outside the law of sacrifice, i.e., free from the responsibility to sacrifice self for others, even the Lord and his cause.
 - c. Self-sufficiency, the desire to be outside the law of fellowship, i.e., no sense of responsibility for others.
5. Self-denial is stepping down from life's throne, laying crown and scepter at the Master's feet and thenceforth submitting the whole life to His control. Cf. Lk.6:46.
6. It is living out one's life, not to please one's self, but to please the Lord, not to advance one's own personal interests, but to do the Master's work in the Master's way, when the Master requires it, and why he requires it.
7. Self-denial means self gives way altogether as the motive of life. See Tit.2:11.
8. There is no stronger normal human desire than to live, yet even this too may be renounced in the line of duty to the Master. See Rev.2:10; 12:11.
9. In self-denial Jesus becomes the Lord of our conscience, will, emotions, and intellect; his slightest wish is our command!
10. In self-denial we become his servant, his slave. When we become his slave, we surrender our right to personal choice, although not our power to choose. Cf. 2Cor.5:15; See Josh. 24:15; Mt.11:28-30.
11. Self-denial is the crucifixion of self, Gal.2:20; 5:24; Rom.6:6.
12. Self-denial is the power behind repentance just as godly sorrow for sin and the desire to start a new life is the motivation.
13. Self-denial, like repentance, involves an abhorrence of all sin in which one may become involved.
14. Self-denial, likewise, implies the denunciation of all sin. There can be no "mental reservation," no "darling sins" not given up.

D. FOR EMPHASIS, CONSIDER SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON SELF-DENIAL.

1. Self-denial is the foundation of godliness; and if this be not well laid the whole building will fail. See Mt.7:24-27.

2. Self-denial is the thread which must run along the whole work or garment of pure and undefiled religion.
3. To deny self signifies to lay aside, to put off, to annihilate one's self, or completely renounce self in the interest of the Master's will.
4. "Self" is viewed in at least four ways:
 - a. Worldly self, i.e., his estate, Mt.19:27.
 - b. Relative self, i.e., his dearest relations if service to God requires, Mt.10:34-37; Lk.14:26.
 - c. His very life, if necessary, Rev.2:10; 12:11.
 - d. Carnal self, pertaining to the body, its passions and its appetites; fleshly; sensual; not spiritual, which is perhaps the chief sense of this text.
5. One must deny self-ease, 2Tim.2:3,4.
6. One must deny self-opinion, Mt.7:21; Lk.6:46.
7. One must deny self-confidence; such as that indicated by Peter in Mt.26:33,34, which did him in. Cf. 1Cor.10:12, etc.
8. One must deny self-wisdom, 1Cor.1:18-21,26; Cf. 1Cor.2:1,2,13; 2Cor.1:12; Jas.3:17.
9. One must deny self-righteousness, Lk.18:9-14.
10. One must deny self-reasonings. But whatever one denies for Christ he shall gain an hundredfold in Christ, Mt.19:29.
11. One must deny self of or voluntarily renounce everything that might hinder his discipleship, in some cases, even that which is lawful and right within itself. See Rom.14:15,20; 1Cor.8:8-13; 9:5-15,20-23; 2cor.11:7-9.
12. Here all that is Satanic in each disciple meets its waterloo. Such as: Self-interest; self-promotion; self-preservation; self-complacency. All such things must forever die.

III. CONCLUSION

1. In our concluding thoughts we are reminded that Christianity or discipleship:
 - a. Is following Christ – imitating him in thought, word and deed.
 - b. That following Christ is conditioned by self-surrender to him.
 - c. That self-surrender to him leads to bearing one's cross daily for him – it is impossible to give ourselves up to Christ without suffering some loss or suffering some trials or troubles with him if we are to be glorified together with him, Rom.8:16,17; Phil.3:7-11,13,14.

2. Under Roman law when persons were condemned to be crucified a part of the sentence was that they should carry the cross on which they were to die to the place of execution.
3. Thus Jesus carried his cross till so weak from fatigue and exhaustion and unable to carry it himself Simon, a man of Cyrene, was compelled to bear it. See Jno.19:17, then Mt.27:31,32; Lk.23:26.
4. To carry this literal cross, an instrument of death, was not only burdensome but disgraceful, trying to the feelings, and was an addition to the punishment.
5. To carry the cross as indicated in our text is a figurative expression denoting that we must endure whatever is burdensome, or is trying, or is considered disgraceful, or is our duty in following Christ.
6. It consists simply of doing our duty as disciples of Jesus Christ, let the people of the world think of it or speak of it as they may.
7. It does not consist in making trouble for ourselves, or doing things merely to be opposed; it is doing just what is required of each and every disciple of Jesus Christ.