

Deny Yourself, Take Up Your Cross, Follow Me - A Radical Call to Discipleship (Luke 9:23)

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[0:00] Luke 9, 23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, this verse lends itself to a three-point sermon, we could say.

So the first point, deny self. Deny self. The Lord calls us to stop making ourselves the centre of our own lives. That really, we're not the centre of the universe.

He is. And God is at the centre of our lives, isn't he? And it tells us here, deny. To deny literally means to say no.

No. Say no to yourself. And the Greek word means to completely disown or renounce. To completely reject something. And this world is often very self-centred, isn't it?

To deny oneself, it speaks of that fundamental reorientation of our lives. That actually, it's not about me. It's not about any one of us. It's about him, isn't it?

[1:26] That he is the centre. And it means we disown our own agenda. And the grammar here for deny is reflecting a command to do this now.

Aorist imperative. It's a command to do this now. Don't delay. It's urgent. There's a sense where it ought to be done right now. Deny. Do it now.

Don't delay. Deny yourself. Let him deny himself. In other words, give up your right to self-determination. Give up your self-interest. To deny ourselves.

To deny ourselves means to put his will, Christ's will, above our own will. To surrender our ambitions, our comforts, and even our rights for the sake of following our Lord.

It's surrendering our desires. Our pride. When we deny ourselves, it speaks of a new master, doesn't it? We kind of dethrone ourselves.

[2:30] We deny ourselves. Imagine if you like, some like to picture it in a symbolic fashion as a throne upon the seat of our emotions, of our heart, as it were.

That there's a throne in our heart room. And before Christ, BC itself seats it on that throne. Reigning and ruling.

And we're the master of our own destiny. That self is seated on that throne. And then after Christ, when Christ comes and lives within us, Christ takes that rightful place of the throne of our heart.

And that is the truth of really Christ taking rulership. Imagine a throne in your heart.

And every day there's a battle. Will Christ sit on that throne or will we? And self-denial is that intent to step off the throne and let Christ reign.

[3:28] Let him live in your heart by faith. Then live as he directs. To deny yourself is to put to death the ego, isn't it? That idol.

That ugly idol. I know for my ego it's an ugly idol. To deny the ego, isn't it? To deny the I. It means I say no to me.

And yes to him. Isn't it? And one of the best ways to do this is enabled by his spirit. When we put our focus first upon him, our Lord. When you say yes to him, then you'll be empowered to say no to your flesh.

And God helps you to do that. As that daily walk goes, as you walk in his will, as you follow him, you'll get more victory. And as you say more and more yes to him, you'll say more and more no to your flesh, yourself, your comforts, your aspirations, where they might be contrary to his will.

To deny yourself is saying, my desires, my plans, my comfort, they don't get the final say anymore. Christ does. That's the preeminence of him, isn't it?

[4:40] To deny yourself. It's also to renounce your self-righteousness and your personal merit. Hey, there's not really anything much good about me. It's like Brother Jacob was saying this morning about the scales, as

it were.

All the good that we do and then all the rotten things we do, actually they far outweigh any little good that we might do. Really the weight of our sin counterbalances the weight of any good things that we can do.

But as we deny ourselves, we're saying it's not about my merit, it's not about my works or my righteousness of my own making. It's about making much of our Lord, isn't it?

Of him getting the glory. And about giving up that self-will such that we're putting Christ at the centre of our life.

And we're actually saying, I'm going to surrender to him. I'm going to have that submission to make Christ the foundation of the decisions of my life, of what future I want to plan.

[5:43] I'm going to have a heart and a mind to what is his will. What does he want? So tonight let's think about, consider the cost of discipleship. It's radical. As we see our Lord's words here, they're very radical.

To give up our own desires, rights, ambitions. We can think of examples of men of God, of women of God through history, of missionaries, of servants of God.

For example, the story of Jim Elliot. He was a missionary who gave his life reaching out to the Orca Indians in Ecuador. And he famously said this, He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.

We give what we cannot keep. Really, these world's treasures, it's just, we can't keep them. But we can see there's something to gain that is eternal, isn't it? And Jim Elliot, he showed his self-denial, sacrificing his life for the gospel.

What is dying to self? There's a quote where someone has described it, tried to define it. What is dying to self? When you are not forgiven or neglected or purposely set aside and you sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy and you're content to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ.

[7:10] That's dying to self. What is dying to self? When you're good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice is disregarded, your opinions are ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise up in your heart or even defend yourself.

But take it all in patient, loyal silence. That is dying to self. What is dying to self? When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any annoyance.

When you can stand face to face with foolishness, extravagance, spiritual insensitivity, and endure it as Christ endured it. That is dying to self.

It's when you're content with any food, any offering, any clothes, any climate, any society, any solitude, any interruption. By the will of God, that is dying to self.

What is dying to self when you never care to refer to yourself?