

# Denying Self

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'll turn back with me to that passage we read in Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 8. And I want to consider with you this morning verses 31 to 38.

Excuse me. And this was the central verse, very much the focus of our thoughts, verse 34. We read that, And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

If I were to ask each one of you, What's the greatest idol? Opinion is the greatest of idols. I wonder what your answer would be.

Now, I'm sure you might come up with many things. But you know, when we think of what the Bible tells us about particular idols, it all points to one thing.

[ 1 : 15 ] The idol of self. Self. The worship of self. The promotion of self. The arrogance of self. The God of self.

I mean, it's there all the time. When self replaces God as the focus of our worship. When self replaces God as the focus of our praise.

When self becomes the most important thing in our life. When we seek to please self. When we ignore the needs of others for the sake of self. When we omit service to God for the sake of serving self.

When we reject the ethic of Jesus who calls us to deny ourselves. To deny self. And to take up your cross. And to follow Him who?

Jesus. Follow Him who denied self. Remember what Paul tells us in his letter to the church in Philippi of Jesus? In relation to Jesus denying self.

[ 2 : 13 ] Jesus, though He was in the form of God, didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But made Himself nothing. Taking the form of a servant. No, this servant.

Service. Being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form. He humbled Himself. By becoming obedient to the point of death. Even death on the cross.

And it's that following Jesus in denying self. Not seeking your own glory. But seeking the glory of God. And in doing so denying self. And that denying self.

What accompanies that? It's enduring suffering. As you follow the suffering servant. That's the measure of who you are. In conforming to the one who came for you.

And suffered for you. Who suffered in his life of perfect obedience. And denied himself. Yes. In his life of perfect obedience.

[ 3 : 15 ] And denied self. In his death. Why? So that you might have eternal life. So you look to Jesus. Look to Him. To follow Him. And you look to Him.

To follow Him. To know how you must live. How should you live. And how should you live? Not for self. Not to gratify self. But to glorify God. And in doing that.

Denying self. And doing it for God's praise. And for God's glory. And yes. To come before Him. With a statement. That I think is so often. Or we say so little practiced.

I must decrease. He. Jesus. Must increase. So come before Him. With that prayer of denial. That denial. Not my will. But your will be done.

Now. Why are we saying all this? Well we're saying all this. Because when we come to this particular part of the narrative here. Of Jesus and His disciples. And of course in particular Jesus and Peter. You see how crucial this whole aspect of denying self is.

[ 4 : 14 ] If we're to follow Jesus. If you're to be a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. Because here we find this wisdom of living well. Living according to what God requires.

What God demands. And He demands that you begin with Jesus. That you start with Him. And don't start with self. That you seek to follow Jesus. As the only way. The only fulfilling way to live for the glory of God. And of course that fulfillment comes from following Jesus. Jesus the suffering servant.

And that following Jesus. That demands humility. It demands grace. It demands love for God. It demands love for your neighbor. And all of that involves denying self.

And a denial. Denying of self. That will and must involve suffering. As you see Jesus tell us here. From verse 31 to 38. Now. Again.

[ 5 : 13 ] As we always have to do. You know. Or must do. Let's get the context of these words. Because here's Mark. The author. Author of this gospel. And Mark has taken us to this turning point in Jesus' ministry.

Why is it a turning point? Because for the first time. The identity of Jesus as the Christ. As the Messiah. The identity of Jesus has been proclaimed. By one of Jesus' disciples. By Peter. Peter correctly identifies who Jesus truly is. And of course. So contrary to what the people of the time. That were saying of Jesus. And of course.

Contrary even to our present day. Even as we were thinking last week. You remember the people were thinking of Jesus. Perhaps a good man. Perhaps a prophet. But certainly not saying that he's the divine.

Christ the Savior of the world. But Peter testifies. Testifies that he truly believes that Jesus is the Christ. Remember Christ meaning the anointed one.

[ 6 : 11 ] Anointed by God the Father. Anointed. As prophet, priest and king. To bring salvation to his people. And that much Peter's grasped.

But Peter hadn't fully grasped. What being Christ. The Christ. The Christ. Meant for Jesus. In order to fulfill Jesus' role.

As the Christ. In other words. To do what Jesus must do. Jesus must suffer. As the Christ. And Peter hasn't grasped that yet. And so Jesus.

And what is Jesus in his mercy? In his mercy towards Peter. And the disciples. Well he tells them in very clear. Plain and ambiguous language. What Jesus must do as the Christ.

What it means for Jesus to be the saint. When we see that in verse 31. Jesus must suffer much. Be rejected by those in authority. Must be put to death.

[ 7 : 09 ] And then rise again the third day. So. What about Peter's response. To all that Jesus is saying of himself. Well. The first thing we notice. Is misguided self.

And just picture Peter there. As he's listening to Jesus. As Jesus is telling him. You know. About. What Jesus must. Must suffer. And being Messiah. And being Christ.

And. Jesus. Showing that. You know. Being the Christ. Jesus being as he is. Is going to involve. No. Easy. Bringing in. Of the kingdom.

As Peter had expected. Because Peter expected. Jesus. The Messiah. Jesus as the Christ. Jesus expected. Peter expected. Jesus to bring in his kingdom. With power.

With majesty. And glory. But notice. Jesus is saying. No. Jesus is saying. The kingdom. The kingdom of God. Is going to come. In humility.

[ 8 : 07 ] In suffering. In rejection. And death. And that's not what Peter expected. Because Peter's Christ. Wasn't the person. Wasn't the one. Who's. Who'd suffer many things.

Peter's Messiah. Was. One who'd bring. No victory. After victory. Vanquishing. The enemy of the people. Bringing in a reign of righteousness. And Peter's Messiah.

Wasn't going to be. Someone who's. Who's going to be rejected. By the authorities. Peter's Messiah. Would be the opposite. Accepted by those in authority. Certainly.

Peter's Christ. Wasn't going to be one. Who'd be killed. Peter's Christ. Was one. Who'd show his power. Over his enemies. And defeat them. There and then.

It was all too much. For Peter. All too much. So we read in verse 32. That Peter takes Jesus aside. And rebukes him. Well. What's all this got to do with self?

[ 9 : 04 ] And self. Had been offended. By Jesus words. Because self. Wanted nothing to do. With a suffering savior. Self. Wanted nothing to do. With a suffering Jesus.

Because. This is the crucial thing. The suffering Jesus. Implied. Suffering. From those. Who would follow Jesus.

Self. Wanted a triumphant Jesus. Devoid of rejection. And suffering. And death. So the offense. Of Jesus words. Well.

Self. Had taken over. Peter's thinking. And in his impetuous self. As only Peter could do. Of the disciples. Peter takes Jesus aside. And Peter rebukes Jesus.

For Jesus words. Instead of praising Jesus. For. For Jesus humility. And his obedience. And his willingness. To face rejection. And suffering. And death.

[ 9 : 59 ] For the sake of others. Peter does the opposite. He reprimands Jesus. A strong words of censure. Self. Had taken over.

Peter's thinking. Peter wanted Jesus. On his own. Selfish terms. And when that's not. Not obvious. Well that's not evident. By what Jesus is saying. About. About suffering.

His own suffering. Peter gets angry. With Jesus. And you might say. Well. How could Peter. Peter remember. He's been called by Jesus. He's been with Jesus.

He's seen Jesus. Perform miracles. Of healing. He's heard Jesus. Preach about the kingdom. I mean. How could this. This disciple. Rebuke. His Lord. And Savior.

You're. But don't start pointing fingers at Peter. Until you look at yourself. Don't we. Don't each one of us. Don't. Don't we. You know.

[ 10 : 52 ] At times. Allow self. To get in the way of faith. You know. When self. Trumps service. When self. Demands. Your way.

And not the way of the cross. You know. Whether it's in your own life. Your own particular life.

Whether it's in the life of the church. And we want to do it our way.

And when God says no. When God says my will. Not your will. We want the opposite. We want our will. And not God's will. I don't know what 2019 is going to bring.

I don't know what it's going to bring. My own life. I don't know what it's going to bring. In your life. As individuals. Or the life of this congregation. Or other congregations. Represented here this morning.

But don't ever. Begin to think of replacing the will of God. For the will of self. When he leads you.

And when he guides you. It's not for any of us.

[ 11 : 48 ] To lecture Jesus. About how he. Leads his church. About how Jesus. Rules on earth. It's not for any of you.

It's not for me. To rebuke the saviour of the world. When my way. Isn't his way. No. Jesus accomplishes. All things well. What Jesus does for you.

For his church. For his people. Is his perfect will. And that will. Is not for any of us. To challenge.

And certainly never. To even dream of. Of rebuking the saviour. When his will.

Is seen in your life. In the life. Of a church. Because you know. Whenever we ever rebuke Jesus.

Even in disobedience. Even in stubbornly. Resisting his will.

Well. If we ever rebuke Jesus. By any selfish. Intransigence. Jesus will rebuke you. He will rebuke me. As he rebuked Peter there.

[ 12 : 47 ] In verse. Verse 33. And notice. Notice verse 33. Notice how Jesus rebukes Peter. He calls him Satan. Satan. Get behind me.

Satan. This is severe. This is a rebuke. Of the. The utmost severity. Here's. Peter. There's a man. Who only. Just moments before. He confessed Jesus.

As the Christ. You are the Christ. The Messiah. So. What's Jesus doing here? I mean. Is he being. Unfair. Is he being. You know. And.

And. And. And. Towards. In his. In his. Sensitivity to Peter. Is that what's happening? I mean. When we. Well. We might argue. Peter. Wants the best for Jesus. He doesn't want Jesus.

To suffer so. Why does Jesus. Rebuke Peter. So severely. In this way. Get behind me. Satan. Well. Think of the time. When. When Satan. Was tempting Jesus.

[ 13 : 43 ] In the wilderness. What do we read. In Matthew 4. Verse 10. We read. Jesus. Saying to. Satan. As he said to Peter. Be gone. Get behind me. Satan. Be gone. For it's written. You shall worship.

The Lord your God. And him only. Shall you serve. Because there in that. Temptation. Of these temptations. Satan's trying to divert Jesus. Away from the path of suffering.

Away. From the way of the cross. And that's exactly what Peter was trying to do here. Peter didn't want to see Jesus suffer. He didn't want to see Jesus being rejected and killed.

But that was. The only way. The divine way. That was the God ordained way. To achieve salvation. For many. You see.

Okay. Peter had recognized Jesus. As Messiah. But he failed to see beyond that recognition. To what being. The Christ. Meant for Jesus in practice.

[14:42] And we might say this. That really Peter was. Really acting like Satan. Trying to. Dissuade Jesus. From following his father's will. From carrying out his father's will.

So Jesus recognizes. That behind Peter's voice of rebuke. Is Satan's voice of temptation. And that's why Jesus calls Peter Satan.

Peter's acting as Satan. Trying to deflect Jesus on his mission. You see what Peter's thinking here is. He's thinking. Human thoughts.

He's not thinking. God's thoughts. Jesus. That's what Jesus tells Peter there. In the end of verse 33. As Peter. As Jesus. You're not setting your mind. Of the things of God. But the things of man.

And Peter's order. Commanded. Get behind me. Get behind Jesus now. So. Peter's been told. Get behind me Satan. But now notice. He's.

[15:39] Peter's order to. To follow Jesus. To go. Where Jesus leads him. To go behind his. His savior. To follow him. A servant.

Again. This is the. The crucial point here. It's that place. Where Peter had been resisting. You see. I've really come back to something I said earlier. You see.

Following Jesus. A servant. Would involve denying self. Involve. Following Jesus. And following Jesus. And suffering. That's the only place.

For the believer to be. Following Jesus. In other words. Not going. Ahead of Jesus. But following Jesus. In humility. Yes. Being rejected by others.

And dying. Dying to self. Because the true disciple. The one whom Jesus. Calls. To follow him. Well. Jesus.

[16:37] Bids him. To come and die. Die to self. Die to the world. But live for God. And live for Jesus. And that's really our second main heading.

Denying self. You see. Peter had sinned. He'd sinned in his all too human thoughts about Jesus. I mean. Peter had desired self.

Over service. He desired self. Before the Savior. As we saw. It was a misguided self. In rebuking Jesus.

Jesus. Peter thought he knew best. For Jesus. And for himself. But Jesus turns Peter's misguided self. Into a guided direction. For Peter to follow.

Peter must follow Jesus. Remember when Peter was first called by Jesus. Remember the words that Jesus used. Towards Peter. He said follow me.

[17:33] And now isn't Jesus again calling Peter. To follow him. And what is the love of Jesus. Towards Peter. The grace of Jesus. Towards Peter. Because Jesus will not reject Peter.

Even though. You know. Peter has. Has been so. Wrong. In seeking to divert Jesus. From the path of the cross. But. Peter's forgiven his sins.

Peter's restored. Peter's. Going to remain a disciple. Even as. You know. I. You. Even as. You know. So often. When we think human thoughts of Jesus.

And. We are forgiven. For these thoughts. You know. When we have. The. Mind the things of men. Rather than the things of God. And we know that forgiveness. But notice.

Verse 34. It's not just. Peter. To whom Jesus is now directing his words. It's to all the disciples. And the crowd around Jesus. In other words. What Jesus is saying there.

[18:30] From verse 34. To everyone. To everyone who hears. The voice of Jesus speak. So listen. Listen again. To these words. What Jesus is saying. For the eternal good.

Of your soul. Let's read again. If anyone would come after me. Let him deny himself. And take up his cross. And follow me. For whoever would save his life. Will lose it. But whoever loses his life.

For my sake. And the gospels will save it. For what does it profit a man. To gain the whole world. Lose. His soul. You know. That. That. That.

That. Thinking there. That. Or should I say. That teaching of Jesus. It's so contrary. To. To human thinking. Because human thinking. Promotes. Self.

Human thinking. Places. Self. At the center. It's that philosophy. That. You know. You hear so often. I did it my way. Or it's like the poem. Invictus. You know it.

[19:26] I am the master of my fate. I'm the captain of my soul. That's the. Human thinking. That's the way of thinking. That dethrones the saviour.

For sale. It's the kind of thinking. It's not. It's not. It's not. It's not the thinking of God. It's not. The thing of. Things of God. It's the things of man.

And that kind of thinking. That invictus thinking. I'm the master of my fate. I'm the captain of my soul. No. That way of thinking. Holy contradicts. The words of Jesus. When Jesus demands.

That every. Follower of Jesus. Deny self. And takes up his cross. And follow Jesus. Again. You know. We know these words.

We know them so well. Deny yourself. Take up your cross. Follow Jesus. But what is Jesus actually saying here? I mean. How do you apply these words. In your following Jesus? Well.

[ 20 : 23 ] I think. What they say. Generally. Anyway. Solemn truths. That no Christian. Can avoid. Or ignore. Old Bishop Ryle. Put it like this. The whole passage.

This. This passage here. The whole passage. Is one that should often form. The subject of private meditation. Think in what Jesus is saying here. Focus your heart.

On these words. What it means. To be a Christian. What it means. To be a follower of Jesus. What it means. To put him first. And self last.

Now. What does this mean? Carry your cross. Bear your cross. Now. We know that we're not cross bearers. In the sense of. What Jesus did. In dying for the sake of salvation of others.

We're not. We're not. As Jesus in that sense. Winning salvation for others. Through. Through the death of Jesus. Our substitute. We're not saviors. As. As Jesus.

[ 21 : 19 ] Is the saviour of the world. But we're still to be cross bearers. Now. Before we. You know. Directly answer that. Just think of what. What that. What Jesus was saying. The context of the culture of the day.

It's the condemned man. Cross bearing. The condemned man. Who. Who. Was going to the horror of his death. By crucifixion. And how did he go there? He carried the cross beam on his back. The beam on which he'd been nailed to. In agony. When he was being crucified. So. That picture of cross bearing. It focuses on the reality.

That every hour. We count. As our last hour. That yes. We're condemned to die. The self is lost. In the reality. Of death upon us.

So. You know. Jesus. Listen. When they heard Jesus speak. Of cross bearing. They'd be horrified. But that's what Jesus is saying. He's bringing the reality home. What it means to follow him.

[ 22 : 18 ] To regard every moment. As your last. To live with that urgency. Of following Jesus. And self-denial. So. If you're to follow. The suffering saviour.

You too. You'll suffer. If you're to follow him. In the path of the cross. In that road of suffering. For righteousness sake. Then yes. You're to be like Jesus. You're to take up your cross. You're to go in a particular path.

Of suffering. As you. Seek to. Be conformed. To the son of God. And therefore suffer for him. Now. Cross being. How will that show itself. In practice.

Well. For example. Take up. The cross of faith. That cross. That. Tells of the only way. Of salvation. That's. Found through faith.

In Jesus alone. It's taken up. The cross of doctrine. That says. The salvation. Of no one else. Other than the Lord. Jesus Christ. It's that declaration. That he.

[ 23 : 14 ] He let Jesus live that life. Of perfect obedience. That he. Is the sinless one. Who died. The sinner's death. For. On behalf of sinners. The one who rose again.

The third day. That he's ascended to heaven. That he's seated at the right hand. Of the father. That he's promised again. To come. Return again. To judge the world. Now. When you affirm.

These truths. These doctrines. These teachings. That's a cross. Because. The world rejects. That teaching. The word. Of God.

That God tells us. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And his being. Saviour of the world. And when you affirm that. Before a world. You're affirming.

These truths. Before a world. That denies. The Lord Jesus. And his work of salvation. So you'll carry a cross. You'll carry the cross. Of doctrine. If you're following Jesus.

[ 24 : 09 ] But you'll also carry another cross. As it were. You'll carry the cross of practice. In denying self. It's what Paul. Paul. Yep. It's what Paul. Described as putting to death.

The deeds of the body. In Romans 8.13. Or as we used to say. In the old days. As it were. Mortifying the flesh. That's going to involve suffering. That's going to involve a daily fight.

Against the evil one. Who will tempt you. And tempt you. And tempt you again. That's going to involve a conflict of the world. With the world that. Has no sense of the sinfulness of sin. But in your denying self. You're going to. Put to death. The deeds of the body. You're going to. Seek to put to death. These sinful desires. And inclinations. That are. False friends to you. Because self. Just craves. Temporary pleasures. Pleasures. Pleasures that give no lasting satisfaction. That's going to be your cross bearing. You'll follow Jesus.  
[ 25 : 12 ] And with the joy of life in him. And again back to. Bishop Ryle. If. If we will not carry the cross. We shall never wear the crown. That crown.

That crown of everlasting life. It's for you. Who have denied self. Who have taken up your cross. And followed Jesus. Disguised self. Denying of self. But then lastly. This. Whole thing of paradox. You know. Talking about denial. But. There's what's called a paradox. Of denial. What's a paradox? Well a paradox is. You know. It's something that. A statement perhaps. That's. You know. Seems absurd. It seems contradictory. But then when you. Test. That statement. You find it's true. The Bible's full of these. Paradoxes. Seemingly contradictory statements. That are actually true. Think of Jesus. 2 Corinthians 8.  
[ 26 : 05 ] 9. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich. Yet for your sake. He became poor. So that you by his poverty. Might be rich.

That's the paradox in Jesus. Or think of the Christian. Again. 2 Corinthians. Chapter 6. 9 to 10. Paul saying of the Christian. As dying. And yet we live. As punished. And yet not killed. As sorrowful. And yet rejoicing. As poor. Yet making many rich. As having nothing. And yet possessing everything. And you know. When you read of Jesus. Here. To the crowds. And to his disciples. He's saying to them. You know. You must deny yourself. You must take up your cross. But look at the paradox here. This paradox. And he gives the paradox. To make you think. Because the paradox. It comes. So. That's alarming. A statement. But it sticks in your mind.  
[ 27 : 00 ] Because it's such dramatic language. Whoever would save his life. Will lose it. Save. Lose. Doesn't seem to connect. But yet. It's there. It's true. Whoever loses his life. For my sake. And the gospels. Will save it. Does it profit a man. To gain the whole world. And forfeit his life. Gain. You know. Seemingly gaining everything. And losing everything. Losing his life. See the person. Who. Who will not deny sin. You know. Who just wants to go. With the flow of the world. Who wants to curry success. And curry favor. You know. Keep into. You know. Abiding by the values of the world. You know. Who wants to save his reputation. You know. Someone who. Oh. I'm not going to have any time for Jesus.

I just want to save my life in this world. I'm going to reject the gospel. Well. Jesus says of that person. He'll lose his life eternally. But the person who loses his life.  
[ 27 : 56 ] In other words. The person who cares nothing for reputation with the world. The person who's not going to run with the world and its values. The person who's going to die each day to the world. The person. That person will. In fact.

Save. Be saved. He'll know salvation. She'll have lost everything the world gives. To gain everything that Jesus gives. And you see. To bring home the whole seriousness of. Of this whole matter of. Of self. Of. Well. Of not carrying one's cross. Of not denying self. Jesus brings home. The eternal loss. Of those who will not lose their life. In Christ. For what can a man give in return for his life. For whoever is ashamed of me and my words. In this adulterous and sinful generation. Of him will the son of man also be ashamed. When he comes in the glory of his father. Or with the holy angels. In other words. The person who seeks to save his life.  
[ 28 : 55 ] In this world system of values. By definition will be ashamed of Jesus. Because he'll want nothing to do with Jesus. He'll close his ears. To the words of the Savior.

He'll say I want nothing to do with this man. And that's being ashamed of Jesus. Jesus says. The one who's ashamed of me. And I'll be ashamed of you when I return. You wanted nothing to do with Jesus in this life. You'll find that Jesus wants nothing to do with you. When he returns in judgment. Something we'll be looking at more closely this evening. Now.

These of course are serious words. Some people find them distasteful. Some are offended at them. Because these are words. Of life.

These are words of life. That Jesus warns any who as yet are ashamed of him. You'll have nothing to do with Jesus. Nothing.

[ 29 : 52 ] Not wanting self-denial. Not wanting to carry your cross. Not wanting to follow Jesus. But Jesus gives you these words. For you to hear. And to come to your senses.

And believe in the Lord Jesus. We're all left here with a challenge. If you follow Jesus. Well remember he's given you a cross.

He's given you crosses to bear. For the sake of your very soul. And bear the cross that Jesus gives you. Bear it gladly. May well be even a cross of severe persecution.

It may be a particular cross that you're bearing. That's known only to God and yourself. But for every cross that God gives you. You carry it in denying self.

Following the Lord Jesus. Jesus who bore his cross. He bore it in life. And he bore it in death. And did it for your sake. But if you've not yet followed Jesus.

[ 30 : 50 ] There's still time. You've been given this renewed opportunity to lose yourself in him. And to find salvation in him alone. But don't let this opportunity pass you by.

Will you come to him. Him. Jesus who left the glory of heaven. Jesus who made himself nothing. To do his father's will. Even going to the cross of suffering. So that you might have eternal life.

And know the blessing of being in his presence forever. To being in that new heaven and new earth. There will be no more tears. No more pain. But the joy of his eternal presence forever.

Amen. Let us pray. O Lord our God. Our Heavenly Father. Forgive us. For taking so lightly.

These words of challenge. O Lord. Give us that strength. That enabling. To deny self. To bear our cross. And to follow Jesus.

[ 31 : 51 ] Even when the road is hard. Even when the road is steep. Even when the opposition is fierce. Give us that grace. We pray. To maintain that cross bearing.

To continue to deny self. And to follow Jesus. Go before us Lord. We pray in all things. Go before us. Even in our fellowship. One with another.

Help us. We pray. To glorify you. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen. Now let's close.

In Psalm 106. On page 140. And you'll need to turn your page quickly for this. Because it's sort of split. We're going to sing first of all.

Verses 1 to 5. That's these first two stanzas there. And then jump to the last stanza. I think it makes sense to do that. Just to complete the focus of the psalm.

[ 32 : 50 ] So Tunis Ottawa. Praise the Lord. Extol his goodness. For his love endures always. Who can tell his mighty actions. Or in full declare his praise. Blessed are those whose way is right.

Acting justly in his sight. Then we'll sing the second stanza. And jump to verse 47. Gather us Lord from the nations. Save us. And your name will praise. Blessed be the God of Israel.

May his glory last always. Let the Lord be praised again. Let the people say Amen. So 1 to 5. And 47 to 48. As we stand to sing.