

Dying to Self

It has been said, *It is hard to die to the world. It is even harder to die to brethren and friends. But it is hardest to die to self!*

What exactly does one mean when he stresses the need to *die to self*? Put simply, the Christian must change his focus from being primarily upon self—to that of serving God and others. Paul stressed the need for this: *in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.* (Eph. 4:22-24)

How can one die to self completely? It seems practically impossible! Eldred Stevens in his book, *The Sermon on the Mount* gives some suggestions on p. 123. Here are just a few:

We must cease to make excuses. The moment that some defensive mechanism comes into play, **recognize it**, and ask yourself: *Why am I letting this upset me?*

We must engage in self examination. Reflect a moment on how self enters into everything you do. It concerns and controls our actions, work, conduct, dress, appearance,...**everything!** We need to remember Paul's writing in 1 Cor. 9:27: *but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

We must realize how much misery is traced back to love of self. Recall your moments of unhappiness, irritability. Self is the main cause of unhappiness in this life!

Look at self in light of Jesus Christ. Notice Philippians 2:5-7 teaches that Christ "emptied" Himself. *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

It is interesting to note that during the life of Christ, his words were not His (Jhn. 12:49); and his works were not His (Jhn. 14:10). Jesus words in Matthew 19:17 are food for thought in light of the subject we're discussing: *"Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."* In His personal ministry on earth—He was totally concerned with serving His Father! He is the **perfect** example to follow in subjecting our own interests to that of the will of the Father!

Consider His actions as He died on the cross. While suspended in air—spikes driven through His hands and feet—he prayed *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* (Lk. 23:34) Peter's statement in his first epistle is worthy of our consideration: *For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

Christ set into action the standard that we are to follow. How are we doing? We must make the commitment to die to self. This will involve work on our part on a daily basis. Only when we die to self will we be able to fully understand and practice what Jesus requires of us in Matthew 5:38-42. Have you put the wishes of the Savior above your own? If not, why not?

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