

DEATH OF SELF

Sermon by Pastor Ambrose Clark

John 12:24 says "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

Primarily Jesus was referring, in this verse, to the great results which would come to Himself and the world; but, in the following two verses, He applied it to every one of His believers:

He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to Eternal Life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. John 12:25-26.

Jesus was referring, in these passages, to the death of the self-life. Very few who profess to be Christians realize the great importance of this death. The self-life means that we manage and control the various problems and circumstances of this present life according to our own wisdom and power, or some other human being. When man fell into sin, he became obsessed with the idea that his ways were better than God's ways and his power could accomplish all that was needed for perfect happiness and protection in all the affairs of this life. Every descendant of Adam has been born with the same obsession.

The self-life has been the cause of all sorrow, sickness, and trouble that there has been, or ever will be, in the whole world. It has been the cause of all of Satan's activities and has given him all the power that he has ever had to distress and harm the human race. God's whole object in dealing with man is to bring about the complete death of the self-life and the enthronement and control of the divine life.

The law was given to expose the impotence of the self-life. The Gospel was given for its complete destruction and to bring the entire life under the control of God's spirit of love, wisdom, and power, through Jesus Christ.

There are three steps to the complete death of the self-life: two short ones and one long one. The first is found in Isaiah 55:7:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon

Also in 1st John 1:9:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

A confession and forsaking of our ways and plans and returning to God to accept His Will in everything is the first step, in the very nature of the case, for the death of the self-life.

The second step is found in Romans 12:1:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Paul tells us that we are to place ourselves in God's Hands for His Power to control us and His Will to be done in every detail of our lives.

In Matthew 11:28-30, we have the same direction, when Jesus said:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

In Psalm 37:5-6, it is given to us in language easy to be understood:

Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

After we have confessed, and forsaken our sins, we are to believe, on the authority of God's Word alone, that we are pardoned and cleansed. It is the same after we have surrendered our lives to God; we are to believe, on the authority of God's Word, that we have been made holy and acceptable unto Him. We are then to take the position that Paul directs in Romans 6:11:

Even so consider yourselves also dead to sin and your relation to it broken, but alive to God [living in unbroken fellowship with Him] in Christ Jesus.

Taking and maintaining this position is of the utmost importance in the death of the self-life; without doing this, self will never be dethroned. The self life delights to see and feel. When we have surrendered to the Will of God on that point and are willing to accept His bare Word as the Centurion did in Matthew 8:5-13, a great step has been made in the death of self:

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such a great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the sons of the Kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing

of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

The third step in the death of self is to meet the various problems and circumstances of life as God's Word directs. In the New Testament, we find directions for practically every detail of life. Each direction, if followed, as given, automatically eliminates the self-life and causes us to place our whole dependence upon the wisdom and power of God. Each command is directly opposite to the wisdom and plans of the carnal mind. Take, for Instance, God's plan for the meeting of wrongs. Man's plan is to right his own wrongs, or trust some other man to do it; to hold resentment and hard feelings. God's plan is found in Romans 12:19-21 (Amplified Bible):

Beloved never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for [God's] wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (requite), says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink: for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not let yourself be overcome by evil, but overcome (master) evil with good.

In this plan of God, we are not to make the slightest effort to right any wrong, nor are we privileged to change our attitude toward those who are wronging us. We are to forgive every person their trespasses from the heart. Mark 11:25:

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him and let it drop (leave it, let it go), in order that your Father Who is in Heaven may also forgive you your [own] failings and shortcomings and let them drop.

We are also to go a step farther and to return good for evil. Matthew 5:44:

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

This is exactly opposite to what the natural man and his wisdom would devise, or do.

When the natural man is robbed, he makes every effort to recover his goods and to punish the thief. God's plan is as opposite to this as it is possible to be. If any man takes away our goods we are not to ask them back. If they take our coat, we are not to forbid them from taking our cloak also. Matthew 5:40:

And if anyone wants to sue you and take your undershirt (tunic), let him have your coat also.

Luke 6:29,30:

To the one who strikes you on the jaw or cheek, offer the other jaw or cheek also; and from him who takes away your outer garment, do not withhold your undergarment as well.

Nothing could be more distasteful to the natural man than such a plan, as it seems both foolish and ridiculous to him; but for us it is most valuable, as it certainly puts a good-sized nail in the coffin of self and also brings a great spiritual reward; for Jesus said:

Mark 10:29-30:

Jesus said, Truly I tell you, there is no one who has given up and left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for My sake and for the Gospel's who will not receive a hundred times as much now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions – and in the age to come, Eternal Life.

When people come to borrow from us, the natural man will only lend on good security and with the absolute certainty that he will get it back with interest. God's plan is to lend and hope for nothing again. Matthew 5:42:

Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

Luke 6:35:

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked

It would be utterly impossible for the natural man to do this, but anyone who has received the Holy Spirit and is walking in the light of the Truth will find it a real pleasure for the sake of obeying God's Word and of being delivered from that most terrible enemy: self. Furthermore, they will also be able to claim a great spiritual blessing for what they have lost by obeying God, for He says our reward shall be great and we shall be the children of the Highest; a return of untold value for the loss of possibly a few dollars.

God's plan for the healing of the body is also directly opposite to the plans of man, and is also very obnoxious to the natural man. The Bible plan is to trust in the Living God alone, without the slightest remedy of any kind, not even a cup of hot water for indigestion, or hot lemonade or bathing the feet in mustard water for a cold. The Bible does not permit the slightest remedy upon which we could place the least dependence for help. Man has done his utmost to provide a plan for healing which would be effectual in delivering and protecting from disease. We do not have to mention how significantly he has failed, for anyone with the least intelligence can see for themselves that there is more sickness and disease in the world today than ever in its history. The Bible is a revelation of how effectual God's plan is, as we find all kinds of diseases instantly healed and perfect protection granted for all who trusted in the Living God alone. Let's read Psalm 91:1-16.

God's plan for servants is found in 1st Peter 2:18-23.

God's plan for wives with unsaved husbands is found in 1st Peter 3:1-2.

God's plan for husbands is found in Ephesians 5:25.

God's plan for dress is found in 1st Timothy 2:9-10; 1st Peter 3:3-4.

God's plan for money is found in Matthew 6:19-34; Mark 10:17-31; Malachi 3:10.

God's plan also forbids us going into debt or buying anything with the intention to pay on installments. Romans 13:8 (Amplified Bible):

Keep out of debt and owe no man anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor [who practices loving others] has fulfilled the Law [relating to one's fellowmen, meetings all its requirements].

When we accept God's will financially, we have the privilege of drawing from Heaven's inexhaustible treasury all the money we need for ourselves and all we desire to give away. 2nd Corinthians 9:8

God is able to bless you with ample means, so that you may always have quite enough for any emergency of your own and ample besides for any kind act to others

God's plan for trouble, worry, or anxiety is found in Philippians 4:6-7; 1st-Peter 5:7.

God's plan for temptation of various kinds is found in 1st Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-3; 1st Peter 5:8-10; James 1:12; 1st Corinthians 10:13.

God's plan for the shepherds is found in 1st Peter 5:1-4.

God's plan for the sheep is found in 1st Peter 5:5-6; Hebrews 13:7.

It is only those who have been filled with and are under the control, teaching, and guidance of the Holy Spirit who can follow all these directions, and become completely dead to self, and have the life of Jesus Christ fully enthroned in them, and become fully developed by the Holy Spirit, and also to enter into their full inheritance in Christ. God gave us His greatest Gift when we were without strength and ungodly, and He says that if He "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also give us all things?" Romans 8:32.

It is the self-life which hinders us from receiving the fullness of blessing in our spiritual lives, in our bodies, in our home-life, in our financial affairs, and in our Christian work. But, as soon as self is dead, God begins to shower His rich blessings upon us in all things.

Abraham proved this, when he raised the knife over his only son, Isaac. It was the final test in his consecration. Mordecai also proved it when he refused to bow down to the prime minister Haman. David, when he refused to say the word and have Saul slain by Abishai. The three Hebrew children (Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) went into the fiery furnace rather than bend their backs to the Will of God.

Our only hope of Heaven is to die to self here. The terrible delusion that Satan has fastened upon the modern denominational churches makes it almost impossible for them to die to self, as God is shut out of the affairs of this life, including healing of the body, management and control of their financial affairs, and for success in their Christian work. Carnal plans, carnal means, and, of course, carnal results, are bound to follow, both for time and eternity.

We are always glad to give Scriptural advice and counsel to those who desire to write us about their problems, and to remember their requests for prayer in our services.

In addition, we publish sermons on other subjects, which take up in detail teaching on how to deal with God successfully and be delivered from the power of sin and Satan; the fullness of the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Word of GOD as written in The Holy Bible; healing and protection of the body through dependence upon GOD alone, God's financial plan and the pre-millennial coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Sent Free to all who request.

Reproduced by: First Century Gospel Church (Washington DC, Maryland & Virginia Area)
11960 Glen Alden Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

Headquarters: First Century Gospel Church
Box 99
Pottersville, NJ 07979 U.S.A.
website: <http://www.fcgchurches.org>; <http://www.fcgchurches.com>
email: fcgusa@yahoo.com; pastor@fcgchurches.org