

Who Are You Denying--self or Christ?

by Aaron Hurst

The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-denial in the Christian life, highlighting the consequences of not denying self and the relationship between self-denial and following Jesus.

Duration: 1:25:53

Scripture: Matthew 10:37-39, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:57-62, Luke 14:25-27, Luke 17:33, Titus 2:11-14

Topics: "Self-Denial"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of living a godly life and denying worldly desires. He references Titus, where it is stated that the grace of God teaches us to live righteously and soberly. The preacher emphasizes the need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and not indulge in the desires of the flesh. He also highlights the question posed in Romans 13:14 about the worth of gaining the whole world but losing one's soul. The sermon encourages listeners to prioritize their eternal salvation over worldly pleasures.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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Father, we confess, Lord, that is our prayer, that is our heart's desire. Father, to press on to higher ground. Lord, to apprehend that for which we've been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Father, today we just quiet our hearts before you, Lord. Reverence, praise unto our God. And Father, we just do ask in Jesus' name.

Lord, that you would just take charge, take control, Lord, of this message, Father. And God, that you would use this message to take us on to higher ground in Christ Jesus. Father, we ask in Jesus' name that

your peace would rest upon this house, Lord.

Father, we pray that you would deliver us from distractions and other things, Lord. But God, that we could just focus our hearts and our minds on Christ Jesus, the Lord. The Word of God, and Father, we ask that your Spirit would just have free course in each of our hearts.

Oh, Lord, move up and down the aisles in this place, Lord, and visit each one of us. God, don't pass any of us by, Lord. Don't pass me by, Lord.

I need you too, Father, and I need this message too. So, Lord, I pray. Oh, God, speak to us, Lord.

May all of our hearts have that kind of a heart that says, Thy servant heareth. Amen, Lord. We trust you for that in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Open your Bibles to Mark, chapter 8. Mark, chapter 8. Begin reading in verse 34.

And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself. So, I let up the Lord this morning to share a message on self-denial.

The Bible is filled with verses that speak to this subject of self-denial, of laying down our lives. This morning I met a brother at the door and I don't remember what I said to him but He said, well, it's not as I will or what I want anyhow. It's what God wills.

It just blessed my heart, you know. Is that our attitude? My life is not my own. It's not what I will.

It's not what I want anyway. It's what God wants. No man liveth or dieth to himself but liveth to God as a Christian.

But if you're like me, you don't have to go real far in your Christian life to discover that sometimes self sticks up its own will and we have to choose to deny self. We have to cry out to God. I thought of especially we who live in America where it's maybe even about half popular to be Christian and you can have the good life and just add Christ to it too.

And self-denial, denying yourself, you don't have to do that. So the burden of my heart this morning is that we would look at what Jesus says about self-denial and denying ourselves and taking up the cross, laying down our lives because I believe we live in a land where there is another Jesus and he's preaching another gospel and it appeals to the flesh. It does.

To be honest, it appeals to the flesh. It appeals to the carnal nature to just live it up. Oh, nothing sinful but just live a good life.

Just be a good person. Just enjoy the blessings. Just sit back and live at ease and eat and drink and be merry and forget about the lost.

Forget about the words of Jesus who said, if any man will come after me, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And another one of the gospels is shared this way, follow me daily. Take up his cross daily.

I find it that way in my Christian life. It would be so wonderful if we could just have a one-time experience of dying to self and then it would all be over, right? But I find it's a daily choice. We have to choose to lay down not as I will, not my will, and deny myself and take up the cross and follow Jesus daily.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. Whosoever will save his life unto eternal life, unto the eternal things of God, he'll lose his earthly life, his own carnal, selfish life has to be denied, crucified, mortified, put off and put on Christ. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it.

He shall lose the lower, the natural, the temporal life which is lived only on earth. It only counts while you're here, you know? It's the carnal, temporal, natural life and sad to say, but that's where a lot of people live. They just live for the here and now, for the senses.

What I can see, what I can feel, what I can touch, what I can taste, and if it feels good, enjoy it. You know, and sad to say, that is pretty popular in many churches today. But it's not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a life of self-denial. Not as I will, but as thou wilt. He asks a couple of important questions in this verse, in this text here that we read.

For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? I'd like for someone to answer that question for me this morning. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Someone want to answer? What shall it profit? Nothing. Nothing.

In the eternal world, it will profit nothing. In this world, yes, maybe a little pleasure, maybe some recognition, maybe some fame, maybe some honor, maybe some fortune, but someday you're going to read the obituary, and that rich man died. And all the things of his whole life were wrapped up and folded up.

All his estate is given out to others, and if that man had nothing more than what he possessed and lived for here on the earth, woe to that poor, rich man. I know I told this illustration before, but I'll share it again. The multi-millionaire said, Doctor, I don't care what it costs.

Just make me well. Money is not an issue. I will sell some of my holdings.

I will cash in on some of my CDs in the bank and all these things. But, Doctor, I must be healed of this infirmity. I'm too young to die.

But the doctor said, I'm sorry, my friend. Your disease is incurable. All the money in the world cannot cure you of your disease.

Only if God has mercy on you will you live. He asked another question. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? What will a man give in exchange for his soul? Anyone care to answer that question? Everything.

That's right. There is no other way for your soul to be saved but to give up everything. I'm not sure if that's the answer that Jesus or if that's the answer that is correct to this question, but it's a right answer.

Brother Robert, it is a right answer. But what will men give in exchange for their soul? What will they give? What's another application to this scripture? That was good, Robert. Is there something else? His own life.

That's right. His own life. These are important questions.

Then, as we go on down, he says in verse 38, Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels. We either deny self or deny Christ. Who are you denying? We deny self, our reputation, or we deny Christ.

Very practical, isn't it? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation. Do we live in such a generation? We do. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels.

Wouldn't you rather, much rather, bear the cross of a sneering remark, of maybe even a slap in the face to testify of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His words? Wouldn't you rather die for the Lord Jesus than to deny Him? I think of an example of John the Baptist. He was not ashamed of the Word of God. He was not ashamed of the commandments of God.

And to that wicked Herod who took his brother's wife, he said, it's not lawful for you to have her as a wife. It's not lawful for you to have her. Well, he got his head cut off for that.

But he didn't deny the Lord. You know, I believe all of us have opportunities in this place as we go through life to deny self and magnify the Lord. Or to cower in fear and to just keep our mouth shut.

I preached to myself too this morning. I have not arrived in this. I have room to grow.

A call to self-denial. It's a very broad subject. I will not be able to cover it all this morning.

But we will look at a few applications to this. In Titus he tells us, the grace of God that bring us salvation has appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

These things speak and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. The grace of God that bring us salvation has appeared unto all men.

And that grace of God teaches us that denying ungodliness, it teaches us to reject and renounce all ungodliness and worldly lusts, passionate desires. It teaches us that we should live soberly, a temperate, self-controlled life. We should live righteously and godly.

But we live in a day when everybody is wanting to just live unto themselves and to just cast off restraint and just live a life how I want to live it. Don't bring to bear upon me the word of God and the standards of God. I just want to live my own life.

But the grace of God, it teaches us that denying these ungodly lives and passions and lusts, that we should live soberly, temperate, self-controlled lives in this present world. Peter tells it this way in 1 Peter 2.11, Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Deny yourself as strangers, as pilgrims, as exiles in this world.

Let us have a proper outlook and a proper understanding of the eternal. Because this world, we're just strangers. We're aliens.

We've been adopted into the family of God. We're His. Yes, we're here in this world.

But we're not to be caught up in the world and in its lusts and in its drive for materialism and possessions and all the things the world seeks after. We'll look at that a little more later. The call to self-denial.

I'd like you to turn with me to Luke chapter 19. I'm sorry, Luke chapter 9. In Luke chapter 9, beginning in verse 57, you want to look at the cost or the requirement, condition of following the Lord Jesus. Verse 57, And it came to pass that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.

And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand into the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

I'll follow you, Lord. You know, I see Jesus laying out the cost, the requirement. It's not going to be just signing a little card at the altar call, and then everything's okay.

It's not going to be just joining the church and then everything's alright. You want to follow me? It's going to be a life of self-denial. It's going to be a life of cross-bearing.

It's going to be a life of putting Jesus first. Not what I will, but thou wilt, Lord. Jesus first.

Jesus on the throne of my heart. Jesus said to one, Follow me, but he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Do you see that? Let me first go do this.

Me first, then, Lord, you're second. I'll come once I'm ready. But my things are more important.

They come first. Another said, Lord, I'll follow thee, but let me first go say goodbye to my friends. I don't want to just cut things off.

I don't want to be unsociable here. Be reasonable. I'll come, Lord, but first I want to go say farewell to my friends.

But see, I think Jesus understood humanity and the heart of mankind. When the hour of decision was before him, was the time to make the decision. Don't go back to your friends.

You'll probably never come again. You go back to your friends, they'll say, Oh, what do you want to follow Jesus for? Everything's okay here. We're doing fine.

We're good people too. You don't have to be so radical and just go off with him. All kinds of reasonings and, you know, the pole.

Just back off, ease up here. Again, it was what I want to do first. But Jesus said to him, No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

You know, looking back to the things behind. You know, I believe this can speak of us, Christians. You made a decision for Christ.

You met him there at the altar. You repented of your sins and you got right with God and, oh, it was a beautiful rejoicing. The chains of the prison house were broken, as Jay read there in Psalms this morning.

Hallelujah. But, you know, the question is where are we at today? Are you looking back or are you going on, pressing on to higher ground? Looking back to the things behind, I think of the stark illustration of Lot's wife. She came out.

She came out with her husband. She came out with the angels. But she left part of her heart in Sodom.

Yes, the angels were taking him by the hand and hastening him out because of the great destruction that was going to come. But she still had an issue in her heart that wasn't right. Could we say she had her hand on the plow? I'm not sure.

But she turned and looked back and right there God's judgment came upon her. Well, I'm thankful that God doesn't respond in that same way today and yet, I think he does. But you just don't see it right away.

There's no pillars of salt around that used to be people in that sense of the word. That literal sense. But when we are looking back after we put our hand to the plow, there is an unfitness proclaimed by God.

That's what he says. He is not fit. There will begin a declining and a degeneration and a going back to Egypt.

Going back to the old sins again. It requires giving everything. Your life, brother.

All to God. Matthew 10, 37. Want to look at some practical things here in this teaching of self-denial.

Matthew 10, verse 37. What's it going to cost? What is the requirement? Matthew 10, 37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Every human relationship must be secondary. Oh, the Bible says honor your father and your mother.

The Bible says husbands love your wives. But every human relationship must be secondary to the love and the devotion and the adoration and the loyalty to Jesus Christ. If you must choose Christ or an earthly human relationship, if you are called to the hard decision of who will you be loyal to, you must choose Christ.

You cannot allow your brother. You cannot allow your father. You cannot allow your mother.

You cannot allow your son or your daughter to keep you from gaining your life, your eternal life in Christ. You cannot. He that loveth more than me, Jesus says, father, mother, and I think we can put in there any human relationship.

He that loveth more any person than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not worthy of me. He that loveth has the meaning of taking pleasure in.

Delighting in. He that takes more pleasure, more delight in, that human tie and relationship than he does in Jesus Christ is not worthy. In Luke it tells it even more stronger.

In Luke 14.26, if you don't need to turn there, I'll just read it from it. It says, If any man come to me and hate not his father, his mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and yea his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Self-denial means denying any human relationship that would come between you and your relationship with the Lord.

Let's turn over to Matthew 19. And we won't take time to read the whole account, but in Matthew 19, in Matthew 19, we have the account of the young man who came to Jesus and he wanted to follow Jesus. You can just see the crowd there gather around Jesus and here comes this young man, just like many of you young men, you know, I believe, full of wisdom, zeal, vigor, poised, strong.

And he comes to Jesus and he wants to follow Jesus and he says, Lord, what shall I do? What good thing shall I do? He says in verse 16, that I may have eternal life. He said, I am a good young man. I am of godly character, good upright moral values.

I keep the commandments. I don't steal. I'm not immoral.

I don't lie. I don't bear false witness. I honor my father and my mother.

I'm a perfect young man. I kept all these commandments, Lord, from my youth up. But it does seem, maybe there was a bit of a dawning on his heart that something still was missing, though.

Because he did say, in verse 20, what lack I yet? I've got it all together, Lord, but it does seem there may be something that I'm missing. Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor. And thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

And come and follow me. Is he going to do it? Surely he's going to do it. I mean, we read all of his beautiful attributes.

Godly young man. He's been raised in a home where he's been taught the commandments and he's kept them. All of them.

Now, just this one thing, young man. Sell out. Sell out your life.

Sell out all that you have. And give to the poor. And come and follow me, said Jesus.

For there was something in his life that was dear to his heart. It says, when the young man heard that saying, he went away. He went away from that moment with Jesus and he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

I don't know if he had great earthly possessions, a lot of material goods, or whether it was his reputation or both, but he went away. It seems like his possessions had a hold of his heart. He was sad.

He was grieved. Because he really wanted to follow the Lord. But then the cost was laid out.

Oh God, help us today. Can God put his finger on my possessions? On my finances? On my reputation? I want you to just ask your heart, yourself, that's heart question. Is Jesus first in my life? We live in a dangerous land and time.

Very affluent, very easy to acquire wealth and possessions. Very popular to be a successful Christian businessman. And I'm not saying you shouldn't be successful, but I just want to lay this out to our hearts this morning.

Where are we at? Where am I at? Where are you at? Is there human ties that are dearer to you than the love of the Lord Jesus? Is there possessions that are dearer to you than the Lord Jesus? We must deny ourselves. I love the responsive answer. As Jesus was teaching along the way, not everyone did what this young man did.

There was others who pressed in to hear him. And when they heard him, they forsook all and they followed Jesus. I think of Peter and James and John, they were out fishing and the Lord came to them and taught out of this boat that they were sitting in there along the shore.

Then He told them, let's push out in the deep and told them to let down their net. And they caught fish like they never caught fish before, I believe. I mean, the boats began to sink.

Peter said, I'm a sinful man, O Lord. But Jesus said, Peter, from henceforth thou shalt catch men. You're going to be a fisher of men.

It began to dawn on him the call of God on his life. When they brought that ship to land, they left it set, they forsook all, they left their nets and they went and followed Jesus. Hallelujah! Levi was sitting there just another day of collecting taxes, you know.

Just another day of collecting taxes, doing his work. All of a sudden, this man saying to him, follow me. And it's Jesus and Levi immediately left all.

I don't believe he even took time to shut down shop. He just left all and followed Jesus. It's beautiful.

But you know, that's what it costs. Leave all. Deny yourself.

Take up the cross and follow Jesus. I want to look into some practical applications here yet this morning. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 9. 1 Corinthians 9 beginning in verse 24.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize. So run that ye may obtain. Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run. Not as uncertainly, so fight I. Not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, unless that by any means, when I had preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

We're in a race, brothers and sisters. We're in a war. The flesh lusteth against the spirit.

Spirit against the flesh. Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. He disciplines himself.

He restricts himself. He puts limits on himself because he's in a race. And it's the most important race that there ever was or ever will be.

He says, I run. Not as uncertainly. Not without purpose.

Not without definite aim. Oh, I want to encourage us this morning. Press on the upward way.

Don't settle for the lower life. He says, so fight I. Not as one that beateth the air. Not as one who doesn't even realize we have an adversary.

You know? Not without definite aim and purpose. He says, I keep under my body. I bring it into subjection.

Speaks there of a discipline. He subdues his body. That's so contrary to the natural man.

See, the natural carnal man is dictated by the appetites of the body. And so, therefore, when the body cries out for food, body cries out for gratification, well, then he's moved and dictated by the body. But Paul said, no, that's not the way of the Christian.

Not the way of the Christian soldier. He brings under his body. Keeps it in subjection.

And subdues it. And the spirit has control over the body. Why do you do all this, Paul? Because I want to win the race.

I want to finish the course that has been set before me. I want to fight that good fight of faith. And lay hold on eternal life.

In Romans 13, I want to look at a scripture there. Romans chapter 13, and verse 14 tells us, Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do not make a provision for indulging the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Deny yourself. Put a stop to thinking about evil cravings of your physical nature to gratify itself and its desires and its lusts.

Let's look at some more practical application here. First Corinthians 6, and verse 12. He says, All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats. But God shall destroy both it and them.

Now, the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. You know, sometimes we ask the question, Well, why not? There's nothing wrong with it. It's perfectly lawful.

It's okay. Well, I believe we have some direction here. He says, All things are lawful unto me, and I like to qualify that, anything that is not forbidden by God.

If God said, Thou shalt not steal, Paul is not saying, Oh, it's lawful for me to steal. No, that's not what he's saying. Things that are not specifically spelled out by God, that a man must by conscience and conviction come to a right decision on.

Yeah, there's a lot of things lawful. It's lawful for me, but here's the question. Is it expedient? He says, All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. And so this is where we must have our discernment and our senses exercised by use and proper discerning of what is expedient. He says, All things are lawful.

We could say, There's many things that are permissible. It's permitted, but the question is, Not all things that are permitted, perhaps in my life, will be expedient. They'll be helpful to me.

They'll be good for me. They'll be profitable for me when I consider the whole. Sure, it's lawful for me, but is it going to draw me closer to God? Is it going to bring me on the way to the higher ground? Or is it going to be a dead weight? Is it going to be a diversion of what could have been in Christ Jesus in my life? You know? Am I settling for something less? Yeah, God didn't say it's sin and say, Don't touch it.

But wisdom cries out and says, This is not expedient. I think of our day that we live in. What are we doing with our time? What are we doing with our life? What are you doing with that high and holy calling of Christ Jesus on your life, brother, sister? Am I frittering it away, playing games? Yeah, the Bible doesn't say anywhere, Thou shalt not play games.

Sure, we play games, but with a purpose for expediency. Do I do it perfectly every time? No, I'm sure I fail sometimes. But you know, you're going to play a game with your little children.

I think there's some expediency in that because you're doing it with a purpose. But if we're going to sit around as intelligent adults frittering away our time playing games, and I hesitate to mention any games because there are so many. I don't even know them.

But the question to ask ourselves, Is it expedient? It's lawful. God didn't say, Thou shalt not. But is it expedient? Will we look back someday with regret? Oh, the godly person I could have been.

The difference I could have made for the eternal kingdom of God's sake. But I went over as far as I could in indulging in the flesh and in the pleasures of life and in easy life because God didn't say, Well, you know, you shall not. And all of the high and the holy calling of God in Christ Jesus, so much of it was missed because my focus was on temporal things, on earthly things.

Oh, I exhort us, brothers and sisters, let's go for the highest. Let's go for the gold. Let's deny ourselves that the pleasures of this world and lust of other things doesn't come in and crowd out and choke out the word of God in us.

And yes, it's not wrong, but maybe it is wrong because I sold my God out so short from what He purchased for me on Calvary for my life. He said, A city set on a hill shall my people be. My people shall be strong and do exploits.

My people shall be full of the Holy Ghost and power. They shall witness unto me in every part of the world. I will show myself mighty through them.

But instead we settled for a nice little easy life and gathering a few things around us. No, we weren't robbers and thieves and adulterers and fornicators, but did materialism, did the God of materialism choke us out? And like that rich young ruler. Oh, we turn away.

Good question to ask us. This thing that's permissible for me, does it bring me under bondage? Paul said, I will not be brought under its power. Does it bring you into bondage? Is it master and you are now the slave? Meats for the belly, the belly for meats.

That's a big thing in our day, isn't it? Meats for the belly. Delicate, exotic foods from across the world. Fifty dollars a plate.

But America, hey, we got the money. Obesity is now a problem. Even in our children.

That our nation is recognizing, saying, we got to do something about this. Everything is super-sized, drive-through, extra-large. Some people eat to live.

Other people live to eat. It's permissible to eat. I think it's good to enjoy a good meal and give thanks to God.

But we must also practice self-denial. If thou be a man given to appetite, put a knife to your throat, says in Proverbs. And I speak to myself also.

There's a lot of obesity in the church too today. I'm not where I want to be in that either. I have needs.

But dear Lord, help us. We would deny self in possessions, in human relationships, in the desires of the flesh. Food.

You know, it gets very practical. What am I living for? Am I living for Him? Or am I living for myself? When people are poor, then clothing are for warmth and for protection of the body. When people are rich and society prospers, then up springs fashions.

And then people are tempted to fashions. It's no longer just clothing for the body to keep me warm. Self-denial.

It's very practical. 1 Corinthians 8. Turn over there with me to 1 Corinthians 8. Verse 10. Speaks of our liberty in Christ.

Yes, we have liberty in Christ. But I believe it gives us a higher call. He says in verse 9, Take heed, lest by any means his liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.

For if any man see thee which has knowledge sit at meat in an idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols? And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth lest I make my brother to offend. You know, I think it's good for us just to consider these words.

There's liberty. There's liberty in Christ. We are free.

We are not to be under the bondage of anything but a higher call though. And that's the call of love. That's the call of love for my brother.

It's the call of submission. It's the call of self-denial. It's the call, not as I will, but as thou wilt, Lord.

You know, in the body of Christ, I and you is not an island to himself. What you do, brother, what you do, sister, represents the body of Christ. We call ourselves Christians.

It represents the body of Christ wherever we go. It also represents the body of Christ local. You represent Charity Christian Fellowship.

I represent Charity Christian Fellowship. People say, Oh yes, I met one of those dear folks from Charity Christian Fellowship. I appreciated their expression of Christianity, their humility, their love.

Or could it be said, Oh yes, I met one of those people from Charity. I was surprised. I didn't expect to see those things or that demeanor of spirit.

I didn't expect I'd find them at that place on a Sunday afternoon. See, wherever we go, we represent the body of Christ. We represent Christ.

And yes, Charity Christian Fellowship. It's a smaller thing if we offend against Charity Christian Fellowship. But it's a big thing if you offend against Christ.

But you know what? If you offend a weak brother, you offend Christ. That's what this says. He says, we sin against Christ.

Verse 12, Let us live by the higher call and life and deny ourselves its weakness. It's weakness in me that says, Well, he's too weak. I'm not going to be brought under bondage to him or her.

I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to go where I want to go. I'm free.

I'm free. Oh, yes? Free? Great cry went up in this land of ours. We're not going to be bound by those old traditions and those old things of the fathers.

We're free! Yeah, you're free in Christ. To magnify Christ and to show love to your brother and to lay down your life and die. You're free, brother.

You're free, sister. You can do it. But we're not free to just go about doing our own things and wounding others and just disregard it.

You sin against your brethren and you sin against Christ. If you just go your own way and flaunt your liberty. Wherefore, if meet make my brother to offend.

What does that mean? If my liberty causes my brother's falling or hindering his spiritual advancement. If my liberty, what I'm allowed to do, causes my brother to stumble and hinders his spiritual advancement, then I'm not walking Christ-like. I'm not walking charitably.

Paul says, if that's the case, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth lest I make my brother to offend. That's self-denial. But I like that and I know I'm free to do it.

No, you are not free to do it. You're in a brotherhood. You're in a family of God.

You're representing Christ to the world around you. I won't do it, Paul says. I will not eat any flesh or any such thing that makes my brother to offend.

And what that means again is, lest I cause my brother to be tripped up and to fall and to be offended. These are serious words. How far do we go with this? How far does it reach? How radical shall we be in the bringing our body under and into subjection that we might win the crown and the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus? Jesus said, if thy right eye offend thee, plug it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not thy whole body should be cast into hell. Jesus, that's pretty radical. Yeah, it is radical.

But if we can see eternity for what eternity is, that's a small thing. It's profitable for you to go through life lame and maimed and halt and enter into the eternal glory world that is prepared for those who love Him, who serve Him. It's a small thing.

What does this mean? If thy right eye offend thee, if it serves as a trap to ensnare you or is an occasion for you to stumble and sin, cut it off. Plug it out. You know, it doesn't say, go rebuke the devil.

It doesn't say that. It doesn't say cast out that spirit of lust. It doesn't say that.

It says, you cut that thing off. Now, I know I could be misunderstood here. Please don't misunderstand me.

There are spiritual forces at work in this world and spirits of wickedness. But we must repent. I don't think it will help to rebuke the devil if we do not repent and plug it off and cut it off.

I think of Moses. Beautiful example. The Bible says of Moses that when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ's greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, seeing Him who is invisible. We must see beyond the present world. We must see beyond the present circumstance and see Him who is invisible, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then we can endure. The Bible says in Revelation, they overcame Him. They overcame the devil.

They overcame the world. They overcame their own flesh and carnal appetites. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.

And they loved not their lives unto the death. They did not love and cling to life, even when faced with death. Self-denial.

Not I, but Christ. Not my will, but Thy will. The reward to those, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house, brethren, sisters, father, mother, wife, or children, or lands for my sake in the Gospels, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time houses, brethren, sisters, mothers, children, and lands with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.

Oh, the reward is even now already seen, but in the world to come eternal life. In John it tells us, He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life. If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be.

And if any man serve me, him will my Father honor. You see, self-denial, laying down my life, giving up my own way, giving up my rights for the sake of others, for the sake and the cause of Christ, is going to yield the reward of being with Jesus. He says, where I am, there shall my servant be.

Oh, it will be a beautiful abiding relationship, and him will my Father honor. I believe that's right here and now already. But then, in the world to come, eternal life.

The grace and power to deny self is in Jesus Christ, in the blood of the Lamb. That's how we overcome. Shall we pray? Let's kneel together.

Father in heaven, You say You're the Lord who searches the hearts. Oh God, have mercy upon us, Lord. Hear our cry, our prayer.

We prayed in the prayer room this morning, Lord. We don't want to go away the same way we came. We want to be changed, Lord.

We want to become more like Christ. Jesus is our supreme example. He did His Father's will.

As it is written in the volume of the books, not my will, but Thy will, oh God. Father, I pray today, You would just take Your Word and apply it to our hearts. Lord, have mercy upon us.

You're the structure of hearts. Lord, have mercy upon us. And lead us on to higher ground.

But oh God, may we respond to what You're showing us. If we need to repent, oh God, then let us repent. And I know You'd let us, Lord.

I believe, so to speak, that You would lead us on to higher ground. Lord, please keep the boys in our court. It's up to us.

So Lord, I just pray, have Your way. In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, we thank God for His Word to us this morning.

Many things to consider. Many things to think about. Ponder what our brother shared with us.

I had to think of our Savior, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We could say the institutor of this principle, I believe. When the soldiers came and arrested Him, crucifixion took place.

He made the statement, No man taketh My life, but I give it of My own free will. I give it. Set your testimony this morning.

Have you given your life as Jesus gave His life? I had to think also, you know, in one sense, that is the Christian faith. If you're not living in self-denial, you have not Christ. And it really struck me, as our brother Aaron shared with us, you're else denying yourself, or then you're denying Christ.

Never heard it put that way. Isn't there truth to that? If you're not denying yourself, then you're living in self. Anyone that has self has not Christ.

Real truth to that. I wonder if anyone has anything to share, things the Lord may have put upon your heart this morning. Just raise your hand and mind the Lord.

We'll share together here a bit. Do we have one? Brother Robert? Yes, please bear with me. God's just laid us on my heart that when Aaron was giving the sermon, my heart was just trembling because I just know what God is and He's so real.

I mean, and real isn't a word. He's so alive. Because I was raised in religion, and I just thanked the Lord I'm not in a religion.

I'm in something that's alive every day. And am I alive with my Lord every day? Or am I rejecting my Lord? Am I just here on Sundays to come to see my brothers and sisters and to show my face? Or am I with my Jesus every day? I don't know how to answer that. I don't think I am with my Jesus every day.

Are we all with our Jesus every day? And you have to answer that from your heart. And I'm trying to answer it from my heart. I just ask you to pray for me.

Because I can't afford to lose what I have. Because I have everything. There isn't anything else.

There's nothing else. If we don't have Jesus, we're dead. And I don't want to be dead.

I want to be alive. I want to be alive to share what He's given me to the world. Not just a charity Christian fellowship or effort.

To the world. To the world. Because He is about the world.

He created the world. He created each and every one of us to put us here for a purpose. Are we aware of that? Are we rejecting it? And my heart's just trembling at the moment because He loves me.

He loves me more than I've ever been loved. And I want more. I've never had this before.

And it's real. It fulfills my heart. It fulfills the void I had in my heart for 60 years.

61 years. But He fills it now. I'm not standing up here to impress anybody.

I'm standing up here because my Lord loves me. And He loves you. Are you giving Him back what He's given you? Are we taking Him for granted? Just like Aaron was saying, we can be stuck in this world, but at the end of the day, there's an emptiness.

Because there's nothing in this world. Unless you're in Jesus' world. That's the only world.

That's the one that will let us live forever. For eternity. With Him.

That we can face Him. And know that He loves us. He's about love.

I just pray and beg that every brother and sister stop and think about what God has to give us. And are we giving Him? Are we being selfish? I know I can be selfish. Am I caught up in my cell phone? Am I caught up in my food? Am I caught up in what I wear? Or am I caught up in Jesus? That's who I want to be caught up in.

24-7. And I have a long way to go. So don't think I just have a long way to go.

We all do. Please pray for me. I beg you.

Thank you very much. You have a microphone somewhere. Amen, brother.

Thank you for that message. I felt like it spoke directly to me. I feel like I confess that I'm not making the right choice every time.

Sometimes you don't even realize it's a test that am I going to live for Christ or for myself? Am I going to sacrifice myself, my time, my desires, whatever it is. It's like there's a throne in your heart and you have to decide is Christ going to be in control of that throne or is it going to be me? And it's a test every time, every situation, every day, that everything we meet, that whether you want to have Christ truly reigning there or you want to do things your way, have things done the way that suits you best. I just really appreciated this call to laying down our life and sacrifice and denying ourselves and looking to Christ for our answers and for our leadership.

So, thank you. Where's the other microphone? For the Sanford? Yeah. This is really tough.

I don't want to do it, but Aaron encouraged us to just lay everything aside and plunge forward. I just wanted to apologize to you all over the last year or so. I guess because of the rotten stuff I've been into in my past and I bring that up, you know, on different occasions and I talk about it, different aspects of it.

It's polluted some of the young people in this church. It's hindered some of them. And parents are concerned about it.

And I'd just like to apologize to you all and ask your forgiveness. God bless you, Sanford. We do forgive you.

I just wanted to amen the message, Brother Aaron. I think you had my name written all over that. I was very blessed by it, and I just want to confess my need for less of self in my life.

I was raised with the philosophy that, you know, you can have Christ and have everything else that the world has to offer to you as long as you have Christ. And that is such a wrong philosophy to have. And with God's help and grace, I know that I can overcome it.

And I just want to ask for your prayers that I can overcome the self obstacle in my life. Thank you. Yes, I want to praise God for that very uncomfortable message.

Sometimes I reason. I try to reason with the Lord, and I deceive myself in the busyness of life. I make commitments, and I say, God, what do you want? And Aaron gave us the answer.

He doesn't want commitments. He wants surrender, and he wants everything. And I feel like I fall so short.

Sister Janice was talking to me before the service about the possibility of some discussions in our sisters' meeting, and I would make a plea that I could sure use some practical help along these lines and some encouragement and some prayer from the other sisters because we do get so easily sidetracked. And Aaron, I thank you for your courage to preach the message, and I praise the Lord for it. Is there anyone else that had a word this morning? Let us remember this as we consider the message.

Was there someone else yet? Okay. A hand in the front here. Sister Eva, God bless you.

I just want to thank my Lord publicly for being so real to me and for bringing me through so many struggles and just being faithful to me. Hallelujah. Thank you all for your prayers and your love to me.

The joy of it all is that in losing your life you find it, and then you have a life, right? And I know many of us are experiencing that. The joy of the Christian life, the only way to find it is if you lose your life, your selfish life. Hallelujah.

I praise the Lord for the teaching that we received this morning. I also want to apply it to my life in areas where I need to. And I encourage you all to do the same.

Consider this throughout the week, what the Lord has given us here today.

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