

Self-Denial

by Andrew Murray

Andrew Murray's sermon on self-denial emphasizes the necessity of rejecting personal desires to fully embrace and follow Christ's will.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, Matthew 16:24, John 5:44, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:3

Topics: "Discipleship", "Self-Denial"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the necessity of self-denial for true discipleship, as taught by Jesus in Matthew 16:24. He explains that self-denial involves mortifying our sinful nature, denying our own will, understanding, honor, power, and interests to allow the new life of God to flourish within us. Murray encourages Christians to embrace this path, asserting that while it may seem severe initially, it leads to profound joy and heavenly blessings. He reminds believers that true life comes from imitating Christ and prioritizing His will over our own. Ultimately, self-denial is a daily commitment to affirming 'Not I, but Christ' in our lives.

Transcript

"There said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" Matthew 16:24.

Self-denial was an exercise which the Lord Jesus often spoke about. Several times He mentioned it as an indispensable characteristic of every true disciple. He associates it with cross-bearing and losing our life.¹ Our old life is so sinful, and remains to the end so sinful, that it is never in a condition for anything good. Therefore, it must be denied and mortified so that the new life--the life of God--may have free reign in our lives.² From the very beginning, let the young Christian resolve to deny himself totally, in accordance with the command of his Lord. At the outset, it seems severe, but he will find that it is the source of inconceivable blessing.

Let self-denial reach our carnal understanding. It was when Peter had spoken according to the thought of the natural understanding that the Lord had to say to him, "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Matthew 16:23). You must deny yourselves and your own thoughts. In endeavouring to attain the knowledge of what God's will is, we must be careful that the activity of our understanding the Word and prayer does not deceive us with a service of God that is not in His Spirit and truth. Deny your carnal understanding. Bring it to silence, and in holy silence give place to the Holy Spirit. Let the voice of God be heard in your heart.³

Also, deny your own will, with all its lusts and desires. Once and for all, let it be unquestionable that the will of God is your choice in everything. Therefore, every desire that does not fall in with this will must be mortified. Please believe that in the will of God there is heavenly blessedness, and that therefore self-denial appears severe only at the outset. When you exercise yourself heartily in it, it becomes a great joy. Let the body with all its life remain under the law of self-denial.⁴

Also deny your own honour. Seek the honour of God. This brings such a rest into the soul. "How can ye believe," says Jesus, "which receive glory one of another?" (John 5:44). Although your honour may be hurt or reviled, commit it to God to watch over it. Be content to be little--to be nothing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).⁵

Deny, in like manner, your own power. Cherish the deep conviction that it is those who are weak--those who are nothing--that God can use. Be very much afraid of your own endeavours in the service of God, however sincere they may be. Although you feel as if you had power, say before God that you do not have it--that your power is nothing. Continuous denial of your own power is the way to enjoy the power of God. It is in the heart which dies to its own power that the Holy Spirit decides to live and bring the power of God.⁶

Especially deny your own interests. Do not live to please yourself, but your neighbour. He who seeks his own life will lose it. He who lives for himself will not find life. But he who truly imitates Jesus--to share in His joy--let him give his life as He did. Let him sacrifice his own interests.⁷

Beloved Christian, at conversion you had to make a choice between your own self and Christ. You said then, "Not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20). Now you are to confirm this choice every day. The more you do so, the more joyful and blessed it will be for you to renounce the sinful self--to cast aside unholy self-working--and allow Jesus to be all. The way of self-denial is a way of deep heavenly blessedness.

There are very many Christians who observe nothing of this way. They want Jesus to make them free from punishment, but not to liberate them from themselves--from their own will. But the invitation to discipleship always rings, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

We find the reason as well as the power for self-denial in the little word Me. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and follow Me." The old life is in ourselves. The new life is in Jesus. The new life cannot rule without driving out the old. Once one's own self had everything to say, now it must be nothing. But it would rather not be this.

Because of this there must be denial of one's self and imitation of Jesus all day long. He, with His teaching, His will, and His honour, and His interests, must fill the heart. But he who has and knows Him willingly denies himself. Christ is so precious to him that he sacrifices everything, even himself, to win Him.⁸

This is the true life of faith. Not according to what nature sees or thinks to be acceptable, do I live, but according to what Jesus says and would have. Every day and every hour I confirm the wonderful thought, "Not I, but Christ" (Galatians 2:20). I am nothing, Christ is everything. "Ye are dead," and no longer have power, or will, or honour, "your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). Christ's power and will alone prevail. Christians, cheerfully deny that sinful wretched self so that the glorious Christ may dwell in you.

Precious Saviour, teach me what self-denial is. Teach me so to distrust my heart that in nothing will I yield to its fancy. Teach me to know You so that it will be impossible for me to do anything else than to offer up myself to possess You and Your life. Amen.

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