

Dying to Self

by Bill McLeod

The sermon emphasizes the importance of dying to self and finding life in Christ in order to bring forth spiritual power and fruit.

Duration: 54:15

Scripture: Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, John 12:24

Topics: "Death To Self"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concept of dying to oneself in order to find spiritual power and fulfill the larger cause of Jesus Christ. He references the verse John 12:24, where Jesus talks about a kernel of wheat falling into the ground and dying to bring forth much fruit. The preacher emphasizes that this message is not just about Jesus' own death on the cross, but also about the need for believers to die to their own ambitions, plans, and personalities. He uses the story of Joseph in the Old Testament as an example of someone who had to die to various aspects of his life in order to fulfill God's purpose. The sermon concludes with a call to seek guidance from God and pray for a revival where many are converted.

Transcript

I suppose it would be the most natural thing in the world for me to bring a message on the subject of prayer, especially after we viewed that particular film. It's the first time I've seen it, I've heard about it, and of course I was greatly blessed and challenged by its message. And I had a little message on prayer that I was half planning to bring this morning, and the Lord very clearly indicated that this was not what he wanted, and so I will not do that, and I will bring the message God has laid in my heart.

But before I do that, God has also indicated that I should share briefly something about the kind of prayer preparation we had in Saskatoon prior to 1971. Some of you will be aware of this and some of you perhaps will not. Five years before October 13, when the meetings began in our church with Ralph and Lucitara, five years prior to that, on a Saturday, we began a deacons' prayer meeting.

We had ten deacons in the church, and we rarely had all ten out, some because of their work could not be there. But we usually had six or seven men. But that first meeting, there wasn't anything unusual about the meeting.

But the next day was Sunday, and that Sunday we had a new revival, indeed speaking cautiously, but had I known then what I know now, it's possible that we might have had a revival then. I was more or less, I'm

ashamed to say it, but I was more or less glad when the movement subsided the way it finally did, and it kind of petered out and things went back to normal. Then a couple of years later, now this prayer meeting we carried on, remember, for five years, and two or three years later, I don't remember exactly when, but we had the same kind of thing happen again, only this time it was among the deacons, I mean, God just blew into the meeting and the men began crying and getting right with each other and getting right with me.

One deacon, I remember, he grabbed another deacon and dragged him out of the room into another room, and they got this whole mess straightened out, and it was a wonderful thing, and I didn't know what to do with it. And the following day, of course, was Sunday, and I feel quite sure that had I taken those deacons into the pulpit Sunday morning and had them share, we probably would have had a revival then. But I didn't know what to do with it.

Frankly, I was scared. And so we went on. Then we began, prior to the revival, a round-the-clock prayer meeting, and we had for some months before October of 1971, we had, well, any time of the day or night, somebody from our church was on their knees praying.

People took 15-minute slots for prayer. We had, so I say, for some months this prayer wheel going, then we had cottage prayer meetings, particularly for ladies, I spotted in different parts of Saskatoon to make it convenient for ladies to attend. Then we closed all of our Sunday evening services with a half hour of prayer for those who wanted to stay.

We usually never had more than maybe 30, 40, 50 people, but we'd have at least a half hour of prayer for a revival. This went on for months before the revival began. And then we had two separate young people's meetings in the church, and they ended all of their young people's meetings with a season of prayer.

Then we had a family prayer meeting in the church, and when I came, if I remember right, it was running around 35, something like this. We had about maybe 140 or 150 resident members in the church at the time. We had more than that on the books.

But we had a prayer meeting, and after a little while we introduced the idea of a family prayer meeting so people could bring their children. We had two separate children's prayer meetings every Wednesday night. Each one had their leader or leaders, and the children were trained in the art of prayer.

Then the young people had their prayer meeting Wednesday night. We all met together for the opening song or two. The young people stayed for the message, and then they broke up into these various prayer groups all over the church, women's meetings, men's meetings and so on.

And then the prayer meeting began to grow. We'd get up to 60, we'd get up to 70, we'd get up to 80, it went up to 100. And I could see prior to the revival, it seemed every Wednesday night there was a few more people or a half a dozen or so people, more each week.

And then God began, on the 13th of October, began to work. We had 150 people out that first meeting, and I think there was one or two responded, and that was Wednesday night, and by Sunday we were packed out. I think Saturday night we were packed out, and then of course you know something of the story from there on.

And so prayer certainly had a definite place. Some of you have heard or read of the praying men of Barvey, an area in the Hebrides, and Duncan Campbell told us something of these men personally, men

who were revived and then began to pray. And these men, here's what they would do.

They would come home from work, have their supper, and go to bed and sleep until nine o'clock at night. And then they would rise at nine and pray until two or three o'clock in the morning, then they would go to bed until seven o'clock when they got up and had their breakfast, and then they would go to their job. And they did that every day of the year, except on Sunday when things have to be different because of the nature of the day.

And these men had wonderful power with God. Duncan Campbell told us he went one time to reopen a church on the Isle of Skye, I believe it was. The doors had been closed for five years, no witness on the island, and it began on Sunday night, there were five people out, Monday night there were five, Tuesday night there were five, nothing was happening, until he got a message across to this group of praying men.

And Mr. Campbell told me, he said, the first night after those men had prayed the night through and taken the burden of the Isle of Skye on their hearts, there were 250 in the church, and he did tell me how many people found Christ in that meeting that night. Now, in some respects, Finney, the great revivalist, was a radical, and here's something he said that you might think is radical, but maybe not. He said, I hope the time comes when the Church of God will employ on a full-time basis, prayers as well as preachers.

He had two men, Abel Clary and Father Nash, as he was called affectionately, who spent eight and ten hours a day praying for Finney. When they knew Finney was going to go to a certain area for meetings, they would go perhaps ten days or two weeks or three weeks before he came, and begin their prayer ministry. Finney said, by the time I got there, the revival was in progress.

I said something like that in a church in Detroit, and afterwards the preacher came and said, Hey, tell me that again! Did Finney really say that? And I said, Yes. He said, It sure cleared something up for me, and I said, What did it clear up for you? I said, I have a preacher friend, and about a year ago they hired a man from the congregation on a full-time basis as a prayer. He said, That was crazy! But he said, You know what? My friend told me that from that very week, revival began in the Church.

He said, Everything just took a turn spiritually for God in the Church. He said, The thing that was cleared up for me tonight was the fact that, you see, my friend is a great admirer of Finney, and he's read everything Finney ever said. Oh, by the way, may I say this, that the praying men of Bar-Vey were asked to take our Church and my personal ministry on their hearts prior to the revival in 1971, and I have no doubt that they were men that God used, and you've heard about the men in India that prayed for three years for revival in Saskatoon and didn't know anyone in Saskatoon, and then God put the whole thing together in his own way.

But wouldn't it be wonderful to see something like Dr. Orr was talking about, where the whole nation is swept and hundreds of thousands are converted? That would be wonderful, and it's certainly possible, and let's look to God for guidance here. I want to speak from a very familiar passage of scripture, and some of you may have heard this particular message, at least part of it before, I don't know. But very clearly this morning, God laid it on my heart, John 12 and 24.

The Lord Jesus Christ is speaking, and he says, Verily, verily, which means, In truth, in truth, I say unto you, Except a corn, that is, except a kernel of wheat, fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit. And sometimes people think that Jesus was talking about his own death on the cross.

Well, there's no doubt that was partly in view. But the next verse makes it very, very clear that Jesus Christ was talking to his people. Because notice what he says in the next verse, He that loves his life shall lose it.

And then he explains that if we lose our life for his sake, we'll find it, we'll save it. As it says elsewhere, for my sake and the gospel's. Sometimes people ask questions like this, they'll say, Do you know of a simple formula, a plan that even someone as stupid as I can understand, whereby I can have spiritual power that's real and lasting? And I say, Yes, John 12 and 24.

If a kernel of wheat will not fall into the ground and die, it will abide alone. If it dies, it's buried in the ground, it will bring forth much fruit. People, do you know of anything simpler than that? Especially in an agricultural community, we ought to be able to understand this truth.

You know, if you have a kernel of wheat and you don't plant it at the end of a thousand years, you'll still have just one kernel, that's all. I did some figuring one time, and I'm not the greatest mathematician in the world by any stretch of the imagination, but I figured out that if you planted a kernel of wheat, and then each year you took from that one stock, you took the kernels that came and you replanted those, and everything that came you kept replanting, and if all of Canada was a wheat field from coast to coast, from north to south, there were no lakes and there was no muskegs and no rivers and there were no people and no cities and no highways and nothing, just one vast wheat field, it would only take ten years until all of Canada was covered with wheat, starting with one, providing you buried that one. But if you didn't bury it, at the end of ten years you would have exactly one kernel of wheat.

Now then, Jesus said, now there are two laws he introduces here, they are absolutely, what shall I say, we talk about the law of the Medes and Persians, they are stronger than that. The law of gravity is stronger than that. They are absolutes, except the kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies of burns alone.

Number one, that's the first law, that if I as a Christian believer am not willing to die for myself, God is not able to use me. I'm not a vessel that's fit for the Master to put his hand to. Now it's very simple, we can't fail to understand that.

And the second law is this, if it dies, if it walks, if it dies, not if it has a certain type of personality, and not if it has a certain number of opportunities, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit. Those are two laws, simple as can be. Do we apply them? Do we think about them? You know, the man called Samson is a remarkable person, and I don't know if you ever noticed in the book of Judges where his story is given, but the Bible records this fact, that he accomplished more by dying than he did for the 20 years he was Israel's judge.

He slew the Philistines and said it themselves, our enemy, who slew many of us, a thousand of the Philistines died when they met Samson, this giant for God. But the Bible expressly says, and the Holy Spirit never wastes words, that he slew more at his death than he slew in the 20 years that he lived. And you remember the story, there were thousands of the Philistines, they gathered from all over the country, and all the lords of the Philistines were there, and do you ever stop to think that Delilah was there, too? And Delilah met her end that day? Archaeologists have discovered that temples like the temple they had that Samson was in, and they say it was perfectly made for the very thing that happened.

Crudely constructed, but sometimes large buildings, and they had these huge beams and pillars, and usually two pillars supporting the roof. And that's what's indicated in the story in Judges. And so there were thousands of people, it says, on the roof, and all these other people down below, there were two

levels of people, and Samson got them all.

And that speaks to me of the Lord Jesus. You know, he got the host of the high ones on high, he spoiled all those principalities and powers that served the devil, he shook them off by his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. And Samson pulled the pillars down, and we don't know whether he pulled them in or pushed them out.

It doesn't make much difference. His arms, I think he probably had to push them out, I don't know how he'd get his arms around pillars that big. So he likely just pushed them out.

And so there he was, like a man hanging on a cross, a perfect picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. But notice again, he slew more, he did more for God. You know, he did more in a matter of seconds than he did in 20 years when he died.

And that's wonderful. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, and that explains why there are Christians who are highly trained. I remember a fellow, he'd been chasing education for 15 years beyond high school, he had so many degrees he'd have to have a three-ton truck to haul him behind.

And he still didn't feel he was prepared to preach. What he really needed to do was just to die, and then he'd be ready. And I'm not decrying education.

Paul was an educated man, but I'm just saying that's not the secret. The secret is to die, to myself. My ambitions, my plans, my personality, anything that belongs to me has to become wholly dispensable in the interest of the larger cause, the eternal cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to illustrate our text, I want to direct our attention to the man called Joseph in the Old Testament, one of the most remarkable stories, as far as I'm concerned, in the whole of the Bible. It takes 13 chapters, I think altogether 12 or 13 chapters, to tell the story of Joseph. Why there are some very important people in the Bible whose story is told in six verses of the word of God.

Why so much space devoted to this man? Maybe we'll better understand after we've considered some things from his story together. There was a number of things he had to die for. Someone put it this way.

They said, do you remember now there were 12 boys in the family, and he was a godly person apparently, and his brothers were a bunch of rascals. The Bible says that he brought unto his father their evil report, and they hated him. As a matter of fact, they were wicked enough that they finally plotted to murder him and would have done it, but Reuben kind of held them off, and then something else happened.

The Ishmaelites came along in the province of God, and they decided to make money on their brother, rather than have his blood on their conscience, and so this is what they did. But somebody put it this way. They said Joseph was the only man on a team of 12 that was playing the game by the rules, and yet the umpire of the universe blew the whistle on him and gave him a 13-year penalty.

He was 17 years old when they sold him to slavery, and he was 30 when he got out of jail and became the ruler in Egypt. Now, here are some things he had to die to. First of all, he had to die to youth, 17 years old, when he was sold into slavery.

He became nothing. He had no rights. He lived in a foreign land.

He was just another man's servant or slave, had to do what he was told. He had nothing, and he was nothing at the age of 17. There are maybe a very few young people here today, I don't know if there are any really in that category, but I wonder how many people would buy God's program if they knew what was to happen at age 17.

So he had to die to youth, and he had to die to youthful ambitions. Remember the dreams that God gave him? Obviously those dreams were from God, they were not something he concocted himself, they were from God. And these dreams indicated something of coming greatness.

There have been great men who felt that destiny, when I think of Winston Churchill, the late Winston Churchill, when he was 21 years old, he said, now I wouldn't personalize it and call it God, maybe he was a little afraid of getting some criticism from some of his friends, so he used the word destiny. He said, I feel within me the movings of greatness, and I believe that destiny has planned that someday I should occupy a very large place in world affairs. Now Churchill said that when he was 21 years old.

So he felt that within him. And Joseph had premonitions of coming greatness through the dreams that God gave him, and he told it eagerly to his family, and they hated him, it says. They hated him for his words and for his dreams.

Well, he had to die to that, because all of a sudden he's a slave in a foreign land, and he's in a tunnel now, there's no end to the tunnel. I was in Norway not long ago, we drove through some tunnels that were three miles long. You think you're never going to get out of that dark hole.

And he was in a tunnel that looked longer than that. It wasn't three miles long, it was 13 years long before he got out of it. Now I'm sure those dreams he had of coming greatness sort of faded away during that time.

He had to die to youth, and to youthful ambitions. Then he had to die to favoritism. He was a favorite son, it says, his father loved him more than all his children because he was a son of his old age.

And this created real problems, you know, sometimes in a family situation where you have a number of children, you almost always have a child or two that's very, very easy to get along with, they're very obedient, and they're so sweet and loving, and then you have children that are not that way. And naturally you have a tendency, although you don't want to do this, but you do have a tendency to lavish more attention and affection on the child that responds, rather than the child that doesn't. I had a daughter, and all you had to do when she did something wrong was look at her and raise your eyebrows, and she burst into tears and repented.

And I had another daughter, and you could rail the daylight out of her and she would do it again. Well, thank God they're Christians now. But anyway, that's how it is.

And it was no kindness that Joseph was the favorite in the family. It only made things harder when he was wrenched rudely out of his situation and stuck in a foreign country where nobody cared whether he lived or died. He was nobody's favorite then.

And that made it harder. So he had to die to favoritism, and he had to die to freedom, living in the land of Canaan with his own boss. Go where he wanted, when he wanted, do what he wanted, free as a bird.

And then all of a sudden he's a slave in a foreign land. He's got no rights at all. And the story is so remarkable, because remember this.

Joseph never had a written Bible. He never had one scrap of the Bible in his hand. He couldn't turn to the Word of God the way we can and be comforted by what he read.

The Holy Spirit had not yet been given. He couldn't attend a conference like this, and never did in all his lifetime. He never had a Christian book.

There wasn't one written. He never had the history that we have, 1,900 years of the history of the Christian Church. Things like we saw in the film this morning, for example, some of the great acts of God in history past.

He had nothing like that to go on. There was no radio. There was no TV.

He had no Christian friends in Egypt. He was all by himself, just he and the Lord. And somehow he survived.

This is a strange thing. You and I think we have to have all these aides to worship and aides to the Christian life to keep on going. Man, some Christians, they'd fall flat on their face three times a week if they didn't have all the aides that we have.

Sometimes we forget, sometimes we forget that all we need really is the Lord. I mean, Joseph certainly proved it. It's a remarkable story.

Now, he didn't know, had he known this, it would have been a lot easier for him than it was. But he did not know that his story would be written in a book called the Bible, would be read by literally scores of millions of people, over a period of 2,000 years, well, longer than that, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 years, and many, many people would be challenged by his life story. If he had known that, he could have endured, but he never knew that.

All he knew was that things had really gone bad, his own family hated him, he was a slave in a foreign land, and he couldn't see the end of the tunnel. That's all he knew. Still he trusted.

You know, the story really is remarkable, because there is no indication anywhere in the story that he ever doubted God. And one thing about the Bible that's always honest about its heroes, if Abraham failed and he did twice, he lied about his wife, said she was his sister, then the Bible tells you about it. If Samson failed and gave in to the sins of the flesh, the Bible will tell you about it.

When Paul and Barnabas had a sharp dissension between them and they fought and so on, they split, the Bible will tell you about that. One of the reasons why we know the Bible is inspired is because the writers of the Bible never try to dress up the heroes or make them look any better than they really were. That's why it says in the book of James that Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.

To put it differently, he had the same kind of sinful fall in nature that we had. And he failed God, he got a little note from a woman, she was going to kill him, and so he ran away. The fear of man took over and he ran off in the wilderness and requested for himself that he might die.

But you don't have anything like this said about Joseph. Somehow he walked with God, in spite of all the discouragements that went on, and they were very, very many. Now then, he had to die to freedom, he

had to die to his own family.

He never saw his family for 20 years. Supposing God came to you and said to you, now I want you, this is my program, my plan for your life, I want you to go to a foreign land, and you won't see any of your family for 20 years. You know, today if you go as a missionary, you can think in terms of the very most of being five years separated from your family, maybe four, maybe three, and some missions now they have a policy, some agree with the airlines where they get special rates for missionaries so they can come home every two years.

But Joseph never had that. He never saw them for 20, more than that. You know, if you're a missionary in a foreign field, and you know at the end of next year I'm going to be able to get home and see my family and friends again, boy yeah, that really keeps you going, doesn't it? I would think it would.

But Joseph didn't know. 15 years had gone by, he hadn't had a word, not a scratch of a pen, he hadn't talked to them on the telephone, he knew nothing at all. Was his father, were his parents living or dead? What about his brothers? He didn't know a thing.

He hadn't heard anything. And still he walks with God. And it reminds me here of the Jetsons when they were in Burma.

Maybe you read this particular incident from their life. He had gone away on some evangelistic tour, and she never heard from him for two years. She didn't know if he was alive or dead.

She just stayed in Burma and she served God and waited, trusting God. And then the political situation got very, very difficult, and so the government ordered all Europeans, non-nationals, to leave. And a boat pulled up in the harbor for this purpose, and we were all loaded on the boat, and she got on the boat.

She didn't want to leave, because she was concerned about her husband. And they got on the boat, and after they got on the boat there, the captain got concerned, and he said, we have 25 people, too many on this boat, 25 of you will have to go back. She said, I want to go.

She was one of the first ones on the boat, and she went back on shore. And the next day, her husband came back. And if she had gone on that boat, she wouldn't have seen him for another 18 months, because they didn't have jet planes in those times.

But those people were so sold out to God. And I remember when I first read that story years ago and asked my son Tim to read it, and he brought it back, and all he could say was, Dad, it's a heartbreaker. What a heartbreaker, people.

This story of Adonai and Judson, well, his first two wives he buried, his third wife buried him, and he buried some of his children over there, and the discouragement, you know, at one time, the situation was so absolutely desperate that he tried to talk another Christian into jumping off a bridge with him so they could end it all. He just couldn't stand it anymore. They were tortured so cruelly for months and months and months on end, and they saw practically nothing happening.

When God talks about a harvest, he doesn't necessarily say the harvest will happen now. But they tell us that today in Burma there are 300,000 Christians. And it all began when Judson went to that country and burned out for God and literally died as a colonel of wheat.

And I haven't time to go into that. You read the story of the book To the Golden Shore, or that other, I forget the name of the first book I read in his life, and he knew what John 12, 24 was, and here's Joseph. He has to die to his family, he has to die to his own country.

You know something? He only visited his native land once after he was sold at the age of 17, just once before he died. He never lived there again. The only reason he returned to his country was to bury his own father.

Now would you buy God's program if that's what he told you he wanted you to do? He wanted you to go to a foreign land, and you'd only visit your homeland once more in your lifetime. You might live for another 60 years, but you'd only visit your country once, and that would be to bury your father. Would you accept God's program for your life? Well, Joseph had to, but there's no indication whatever that he murmured against God.

Remember in Philippians 2, it says, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both the will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings, murmurings against God and disputings with men, that you may be blameless and harmless, blameless before God and harmless before men. The sons of God will rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." To come back to Joseph then, he had to die to love.

You know, you can stand anything if your family loves you, if you can find at least one person that loves you. I mean, you can stand anything, you can go through a lot. A man who was a preacher years and years ago, who had gone through a great amount of discouragement and persecution, was asked one time how in the world he ever managed to maintain his equilibrium and this spiritual high he seemed to be on all the time, and he said, My family loves me.

And that was enough. When he got home, his family loved him. But Joseph's family didn't love him, they hated him.

He begged for his life when he was down in the pit, he besought them with tears, and they just laughed at him. They hated him, because of his dreams and because he told them, he told their father what kind of lives they were living in, they hated him. And really he had no one to love him, and no one in Egypt to love him either.

You know, sometimes we Christians think we have to have human love. A man came all the way from Florida, a man in his seventies, down to Thunder Bay when I was in the crusade there, a preacher. He had been, he was not then, because his wife had left him, she didn't love him, she told him, she just walked out on him, and he was crying, he said, Brother Bill, I don't have anyone in the world that loves me.

I don't know how I can carry on. I said, You know, we sing in one of our songs, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name, and that's what God wants you to do, he's knocking out all the props. You don't have any human love, but you've got God's love, and that's a lot more than human love, and God is trying to knock out all the props so you'll depend wholly on him.

You know something? We get so concerned about having human love, we work at it so desperately, some people wind up in asylums because, you know, they try so hard to find love, and you may know that the

newest approach to psychiatric counseling is based on the idea that men have emotional problems for two reasons, one, they can't receive love adequately, and two, they can't give love adequately, and then they crack up. And we think we have to have human love. Now, if you have human love, that's an added bonus, but you don't have to have it.

Joseph never had it. He just had the love of God, and that he knew, and to that he clung, and he was never disappointed. So he had to die to love, he died to his family, to his country, to his customs, and I had a friend, and he was well briefed, very well prepared before he went to a SAM in India, telling me how it was when he first got there, man, the country was so quaint, he really enjoyed it.

And then one day he told some missionaries where they were at the station, that he was going to go down to a certain place a hundred miles away with a car, and they said, fine, plan on a couple of days, he said, a hundred miles, I plan to come back today, probably before, oh no, they said, you plan on a couple of days. And he didn't know what they meant, so he started off, and he said he was driving down a hard surface highway, and it wasn't like highways in Canada State, but it was a good highway, and he's driving down the highway, and then all of a sudden he sees a cowherd up in the field, and the cowherd looks back and sees him coming, and runs all the cows up in the road. So then he's got to drive at two miles an hour.

And he said, Bill, it was so funny, he said, I just sat in the car, and I just about collapsed with laughter, I was slapping my legs and just roaring with laughter, and he said, the fortieth time it happened, I could have murdered him. And then he came to a crossing, and the train was due at two o'clock or something in the afternoon, so at a quarter to two, the wigwags came down. Now the train doesn't stop till four-thirty, but that doesn't make any difference, and so the traffic builds up on both sides of the crossing, until there's hundreds of people there, who don't have the greatest time just visiting, and this Canadian, he's just beside himself.

And he almost never made it. We used to get letters of prayer for Brother Ernie, he's really struggling. Then on top of that, he had dysentery, sixty percent of the time of the first five years he was in a SAM.

And that's mighty rough. While Joseph had to adjust to a new culture overnight, more preparation, whatever, and somehow he made it. He had to forget his own language and die to that, because they don't speak his language down in the land of Canaan, or down in the land of Egypt, rather.

I mean, the minute he hit Egypt, he had to learn a new language. Nobody asked him if he wanted to, he simply had to. And he had to forget his own language, because he had nobody to whom he could speak.

Would you buy that kind of a program? Why, we would go to language school for a year, two years, before we go to the foreign field, and then gradually ease into their language over a period of two or three years, depending on the country we're in, and how difficult the language is, and how apt a student we are. But Joseph had none of that. He simply had to adjust.

And I'm sure the food was different, they're telling me, when I go to India, the food is very highly spiced and so on. I can't say I'm looking forward to seeing anticipation to that, but I'm going to have to adjust for the time I'm there, and enjoy it, and I'm sure the Lord will enable me to do it. But for Joseph, it was such a radical and such an abrupt thing to do, people, it was just forced on him from above.

But he knew it was the will of God, and there must have been, you see, back in those days, the cross was not known, it was not known then as an instrument of torture and death, totally unknown. But the concept

of dying to self was well known. Abraham knew what it meant to die to himself, when God said, I want you to leave your country and go to this other land.

He just simply went. He couldn't go to a travel agency and get some brochures and see what the highlights were, what the country was really like. He just simply had to go.

And he went. He obeyed, it says, not knowing where he was going. We at least know where we're going when I go to India or South America, or if you go to some place in the world, before you go, you find out all you can about the country, and there's lots to learn, lots of material available, but not for Joseph.

He just has to go. So he had to die in all these areas. I don't know how he practiced his faith back in the homeland, what kind of songs they sang and how they got together and prayed together and all this kind of thing, but all that was radically changed as well.

He couldn't do that anymore. He was a slave without any rights at all, so he had to move immediately into a new dimension as far as fellowship with God was concerned. Totally different.

And like I say, he never even had the right to make a decision about it, it was just forced on him. But there must have been a time in his early teenage years when he came to die to himself so he might live unto God, because certainly he had fellowship with God. There's no other way he could have lasted the way he did, if God had not sustained him and given him power and strength.

And God did that. And the beautiful thing is this, that while he never had the right to make any decisions in these areas, yet when they were forced on him, he accepted them without any murmuring or complaining that we can find any record of in the Word of God. So I think this, that if God had come along and said, Joseph, this is the plan, what do you think of it? He'd say, Lord, I'll do it.

It looks rough, but I'll do it, because he was dead to self and he was living to the glory of God. And he'd never heard of John 12.24, he's heard of it now, long ago, but he had never heard it then. But the truth he well knew.

Of course we can think of many other areas. For example, he had to die, and I want to emphasize this point, he had to die to his own language, because you know what it says in the book of Genesis about the Canaanites and the Hebrews? It says it's an abomination for an Egyptian to eat bread with a Hebrew. He had to absolutely die to his own nationality.

So somebody said down in Egypt, some Egyptian said, Hey, Joe, where did you come from? Well, I came from a country up this way. What's the matter? Are you ashamed of your country? Not really. I'm a Hebrew.

A Hebrew! Yeah. It was an abomination for an Egyptian to eat bread with a Hebrew. Well, supposing somebody said, Joseph, what kind of work did you do back in your homeland? Well my father was a farmer.

Yeah, but what did you do? Well, I worked with my dad. Hey, Joseph, what's the matter? Are you ashamed of what you did? What did you do? Well, he was afraid to say it, because the Bible says in Genesis that every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians. He didn't want to say it.

Well, I was a shepherd. A shepherd! Yeah. He had to die to that, to his life's work, to his nationality.

You have to forget all that and become God's man or God's woman in God's place with all personal preferences gone, because except the kernel of wheat, fall into the ground and die. Absolutely, utterly die. Some of us wouldn't mind dying and being buried, providing we could have at least a finger up with a name tag on it, it's Bill McLeod lying down here, waving it every now and then, you know.

It wouldn't be so bad. I'll never forget one time the Lord came to me and said, it was as clear as a bell, and I said, Would you mind it if I let somebody else take credit for something you did? I said, Lord, the flesh wouldn't like it, but I'll do it, yes. And the very next day I was in a home, and we were having sweet fellowship.

There were some people, and then they began talking about a family that it just happened that God had used me in their life in a remarkable way, and one of the fellows who was talking about this family said, Wasn't it just marvelous how God used so-and-so, and you mentioned a certain Christian worker, that had nothing whatever to do with it, wasn't it marvelous how God used that man to win that family to Christ and to make him the kind of family they are? And I just looked at the Lord and I smiled. I knew what the Lord was doing. It was just so sweet to let God have the glory.

We like to have it, but to let God have the glory, you know something that is a greater blessing in letting God have the glory than in getting patted on the back yourself. I remember one time in a crusade, and Howard Gardner and I were together, and the Lord was working, and we came down from the platform at the end of the meeting, and two old ladies came tearing up, and one of them, she was so gushing, she said, Oh my, you're just two modern apostles, that's what you are. And I looked at her, and I didn't even smile, and I said, that's what the devil told me when I was on the platform.

And I hurt her, and I felt badly about it afterwards, but I just felt I had to say it, because we should never, you know, the Bible says, he that speaks flattery to his friends, even in the eyes of his children, shall fail. You want your kids to be blind? Or just go around flattering people? I mean, this is what God says, and so don't ever flatter people. If God uses someone in your life, you can thank them, but make sure you don't flatter them, see.

Because flattery is the food for fools, that's not quoted in the Bible, but that would be the teaching of the Bible, I am sure. Well, here's Joseph. Now then, before we close, there was a couple of other areas, very, very important areas, to which he had to die before God could use him in the way he wanted to.

First of all, things had taken an upturn, and Joseph had tremendous administrative ability and he knew it. And all of a sudden, he was still a slave, but all of a sudden he was given the running of a huge grain operation, and he was just enjoying that no end. And things seemed to take an upturn, because now Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, and Joseph remember, was his personal slave, because Potiphar bought him.

And Potiphar sees this man as very unusual, has remarkable ability, so he gives him the running of the whole thing. And he made a total committal to Joseph of everything he had, and the committal was so complete that Joseph said, My master has committed to me everything he has, and he doesn't know anything except the bread on the table. And Joseph was enjoying it.

It looked like the wheels of God were moving now, and things were really coming to pass, and God was changing the order of things, and everything was going better, and I'm sure he was just enjoying it, and wondering what door God would open next, and how God would get him out of this, and somehow those dreams he'd had years ago would no doubt start coming back into his mind. Maybe God is going to do

something great now. And all of a sudden, he lost it all, and it was rudely taken out of his hands.

Has that ever happened to you? There's a verse in Proverbs that says, Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down, and to our kinds, people, when God will exalt you, lift you up, and knock you flat on your face, and you'll cry and wonder why. But you won't wonder why if you know what the Bible says. That's just God.

Let him do it. Maybe you heard the story of Praying Hyde, and he was an extremely humble man, mightily youth of God, but a man who knew what John 12, 24 was all about. He was asked to speak at this famous Keswick conference in England.

They had a deep for life message, and certainly Praying Hyde, of all people, knew what that message was, but he was a very slow speaker. And they said it took maybe 10 or 15 minutes for him to get warmed up to the point where he could talk in a flowing manner. Well, they were used to having the best of speakers at Keswick, and after they'd listened to him painfully for 7 or 8 minutes, someone couldn't stand him anymore, and a lady got to her feet and she announced to him, and they sang him down, and he never spoke again at that conference.

Now, let me ask you a question. Supposing that happened to you, what would your reaction be, mortified, embarrassed, crying? Hyde had a friend there, an older Christian, and as soon as possible that man went running to Hyde at the end of the meeting, and he got a hold and said, Oh, Brother Hyde, that was a terrible thing they did to you. And he said, Brother Hyde looked at him and smiled so sweetly and said, It is the Lord.

Let him do as seemeth him good. Now, that's John 12.24. He didn't have to speak to a big conference, it really didn't matter. It is the Lord.

Let him do as seemeth him good. So he had to die when everything seemed to be turning right, it goes bad again. Not only that, now he's thrown in jail.

Then he had to die to something else. He had to die to his personal reputation. He lived a pure and godly life.

You know, it's an awful thing if you live a pure and godly life, and all of a sudden you find that people are circulating stories about you that you're immoral. And they did that with Joseph, because there's an old saying that hell has no fury like a woman scorned, and when he would not sin with Fortify's wife, then she lied about him and she told her husband. Remember the story? She told her husband, That Hebrew servant that you brought in, he tried to rape me today.

And her husband, understanding, was very, very angry, and had him thrown in the prison where the king's prisoners were bound. That was all in God's plan. But you know, I remember being shown through the St. Cloud Penitentiary one time by a Christian superintendent, and as we went through there, went through their lifers section, 60 or 70 lifers there, and all the rest of it, we were in there a couple of hours, and then he said this to me.

He said, Bill, every last person, there are 1,200 prisoners here, and every prisoner in this place has been frayed. Every last person is absolutely innocent. There isn't one person in this jail who ought to be, you just ask them.

Just ask them. Now, I don't suppose it was any different in the prison where Joseph was, and they would say, Joseph, why are you here? And he'd say, well, look, you guys, I'm from Canaan, and Fortify's wife, she frayed me, she claimed I tried, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we know, yeah, we have the same problem. They wouldn't believe him.

They think he was a liar just like they, that he was really a rapist. And it would be very, very difficult, you know, to die to your reputation, but here's what it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience is the first statement. And then he says, by honor and dishonor, the honor part is nice, but what about the dishonor part, by evil report and good report, the good report is fine, what about the evil report part? As deceivers and yet true, well, the true part we can take, what about the deceiver part? If they call you a deceiver, and they lie about your character, and they will do that, well, Jesus Christ said, they'll say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake.

He said rejoice in that, they'd be exceedingly glad. I never heard of a Christian jumping in the air and clicking his heels together because somebody lied about him, but Jesus said we should, and don't try and defend yourself, don't try and make it look any better than it was, that's a wasted effort, and if the devil finds out that he can get you to turn aside to protect yourself, he'll do it the rest of your life, you'll be turning aside to protect yourself. That's a mistake that Charles Finney never ever made.

He was hated and vilified like almost no man of his times, but he said God showed him it was a trick of the devil to try and get him to turn aside, he never did turn aside, and after a while the opposition all died, the devil couldn't get him that way. And nobody was vilified in England more than Charles Spurgeon, especially in the early days because he was such a young preacher and these fantastic crowds were following him and almost every pulpit in London was against him. One famous preacher said he's gone up like a skyrocket and he'll come down like a dead stick.

Well he didn't. But he didn't spend any time trying to defend himself, he just did God's business. And let me share something about his life, something that's been a tremendous blessing to me because I knew that this man Spurgeon had had a deep work of the Holy Spirit in his life at some time, but I could never find out, as much as I read, I couldn't find out when it happened, except something happened when he was baptized.

That doesn't normally happen, but it happened in his life, but there's no details at all given until within the last year I read this book, it's called The Early Years. There are two books, a companion volume, The Early Years and The Full Harvest. I would say get them and read them.

Wilbur Smith said sell everything you've got and read Spurgeon. Well you might not agree with that, but anyway, you'll find this interesting. Spurgeon shortly after he was converted at the age of 16 or so, 15 or 16, he came across the Bible teaching on the subject of baptism, so he decided he should obey the Lord.

But in further study of the Bible, he was a great student of the Bible and other books and so on, he came to realize that this typified a death to self, buried with Christ in baptism, when also we are risen with him through faith in the working of God that has raised him from the dead. So what did he do, get ahold of a preacher and say, look, I'd like to be baptized next Sunday? No, he didn't do that. He began to pray and he began to fast and he began to go off in the woods.

And people, he spent hours on his face before God. He spent weeks and weeks preparing his heart. He said, God, when I go down to those waters, I want to die, absolutely die to myself and everything I am and

everything I know, and when I come up out of those waters, I want to live forever for your glory.

And he refused baptism for months because he felt he wasn't ready. And when he said he was ready, he was baptized in a river dividing two counties. And you know, prior to that, he said he often had fears.

He was afraid to share Christ. He had doubts about his salvation. And all I can tell you is what he said himself.

He said, when I came up out of the waters, God took all my fears away, my doubts were gone. He said they went down the river and out into the ocean and the fishes must have swallowed them because I never felt them since. But you see, no doubt at all, at that time, John 12, 24 became a living reality in his life.

Now, he would not want me to preach him. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. But certainly he knew the meaning of our text, and that was the secret of his success.

And George Truett, who was called the American Spurgeon, I used to think that the reason God used him was because he had this fantastic brain, and he did have it, and he was marvelously used of God. And then I came across a little book, and here's a beautiful little statement by George Truett, and here's what he said. He said, think of a preacher being a moral coward.

He said, what is the price of spiritual power? He said, the price is great. I must be crucified with Christ. I must die utterly to myself, to sin, to everything I am and have.

And then I must live unto my Lord without evasion or reservation. And when I read that, I said, Lord, forgive me for what I thought. I knew then the secret of his power and strength.

And when he asked George Mueller the secret of his strength, what did he say? He said, there came a day when George Mueller died, but he was a tall man, and every time he said the word died, he began to bend, and he went lower and lower and lower until his head almost touched the floor. He just kept saying, there came a day when George Mueller died, died, died, died, died. And following that day, God used him.

And then the third thing that Joseph had to die to was this, he had to die to all human help and trust, and that's the hardest of all. How do I know that? Well, you remember the two men, the butler and the baker that had offended their Lord, the Pharaoh of Egypt, and they both had a dream one night, and Joseph interpreted the dream the next morning, and the butler was restored to favor and fellowship and the baker was hanged, just exactly as Joseph had said. And so before they left the prison, you see the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and that's when it all happened, and so Joseph said to the butler, now when you're restored to favor, will you please speak for me to Pharaoh? Joseph was then 27 or so years of age, before things were really going bad, slow, slow.

Please speak for me to Pharaoh. You know what it says in Jeremiah, cursed is the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm and his heart departs from the Lord, but all blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord. And you know what it says, yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

How could he? How in the world could he forget Joseph? But God made him forget, because it wasn't God's time yet, because remember, among other things, Joseph was to be a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's a sermon all by itself. The many facets of his life were just a kind of a prefiguring of the Lord Jesus. That's another thing that Joseph did not know about, because you see, Jesus Christ was 30

years old when he began his public ministry, and Joseph was 30 years of age when he began his.

So God couldn't let him out of jail at the age of 27 or 28, yet the waitlist was 30. So the picture would be complete, and so he languishes in jail, wondering what's coming next. George Middleton with the Sudan Mission over there in Ethiopia told me he'd been in jail six or eight times.

He said, when you go to jail where I live, you never know if you're going to get out again, because the jailers are so corrupt and crooked, and you don't have recourse to lock courts. If you have a friend that can give the guy enough money, he'll maybe get out. But he just enjoyed it, because he knew it was all part of dying with Christ, and always out of these situations God brought power, new spiritual power.

Let's look at our text as we close, except the kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it die, what? It brings forth much fruit. May I ask you this question? Do you believe that for yourself? You can believe it for Joseph, you can believe it for somebody else, but could you believe it for yourself, that the secret of power and spirituality in your life is that you die to yourself and begin to live unto God without evasion, remember? Without reservation? Would you be willing for that? That's the question. That's the question.

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