

Self Denial

by Charles Finney

Self-denial, taking up the cross, and following after Christ are indispensable conditions of salvation, requiring a state of mind that denies self, suffers reproach and persecution, and is devoted to the glory of God and the good of the universe.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Following Christ", "Self-Denial"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the critical nature of self-denial in the Christian life, explaining that true self-denial is not merely the abandonment of selfish desires for selfish reasons, but a genuine sacrifice for the good of others and the glory of God. He outlines what self-denial is and is not, clarifying that it involves a daily commitment to take up one's cross and follow Christ, which is essential for salvation. Finney warns against the misconception that self-denial leads to unhappiness, asserting that true happiness is found in selfless acts of love and service. He concludes that a life of daily self-denial and cross-bearing is indispensable for anyone seeking to follow Christ and attain salvation.

Transcript

TEXT--Luke 9:23: "He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

In this discussion I shall show:

- I. WHAT SELF-DENIAL IS NOT.
- II. WHAT IT IS.
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.
- IV. WHAT IS NOT TAKING UP THE CROSS.
- V. WHAT IS TAKING IT UP.
- VI. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.
- VII. WHAT FOLLOWING AFTER CHRIST IS NOT.

VIII. WHAT IT IS.

IX. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.

X. THAT THESE ARE INDISPENSABLE CONDITIONS OF SALVATION.

I. What self-denial is not.

1. It is not the giving up of one form of selfishness for the sake of another form. In other words, it is not the triumph of one form of selfishness over another form of the same principle, &c.

(1.) Breaking off from any form of sin, for fear of the consequences of indulgence to self, is not self-denial; for this, after all, is only consulting self-interest.

(2.) Breaking off from any form of sin, from the expectation of reward, is not self-denial, but only consulting self-interest.

(3.) Forsaking any form of indulgence for prudential reasons, such as regard to the health, wealth, reputation, &c. This is not self-denial, but only a regard to self-interest. It is only one form of selfishness triumphing over another.

(4.) Self-denial does not consist in either doing or omitting any thing whatever from selfish motives. For it is impossible to deny self for selfish reasons. It is absurd to talk of denying self to promote self-interest; for this is not self-denial, but is only denying self in one respect, for the sake of gratifying self in another respect. Self is after all at the bottom. And self-interest is the grand reason of every change of this kind.

(5.) Self-denial, therefore, does not consist in abandoning the use of whatever is injurious to us, because it is so.

(6.) Nor does self-denial consist in giving to others that for which we have no use, or the use of which could be of no service to us. There is no denying self in this.

(7.) Nor does self-denial consist in giving or doing that which subjects us to no privation, inconvenience, or trouble. What self-denial is there in this?

(8.) Nor does it consist in that which subjects us to any degree of expense, inconvenience, trouble, reproach, or even death itself, if it be for any selfish reason; for in this case it is only consulting, upon the whole, self-interest. It is self-indulgence, instead of self-denial.

II. What self-denial is.

1. It is the denying of self, not for the sake of a greater good to self, but for the sake of doing good to others. This is really denying self.

2. Self-denial is a real sacrifice of self-interest, from disinterested motives; that is, from a singleness of eye, to glorify God, and do good to others.

III. What is implied in self-denial.

1. True holiness of heart, or supreme disinterested love to God. If God's glory is so preferred to our own happiness or convenience, that we deny ourselves for the sake of glorifying Him, it proves that our love to

Him is supreme.

2. Self-denial implies disinterested love to men. If we deny ourselves for the sake of promoting their happiness, whenever their happiness is a greater good than our own, it shows that we love them according to the requirement of the law of God.

3. It implies the giving up of that which might be a real good to us. It is no proper denial of self, unless we might be benefited by the thing which is given up. If, as I have before said, the use of it would be an injury to us, and it be abandoned for that reason, this is rather self-indulgence than self-denial.

4. Self-denial implies the joyful giving up of what we need, or what might contribute to our comfort, for the purpose of doing a greater good to others. For example--here is a man who has been to the baker's, and purchased a loaf of bread for his supper. He has been laboring hard, and really needs the bread. But in passing a miserable habitation of poverty, a little, pale, emaciated child stands at the door, and, stretching out its little beggar hands, asks for bread. He is induced to enter this abode of wretchedness, and finds a widowed mother, sick and famishing, surrounded with her starving babes. He is hungry himself; but they are starving. He has no more money. If he gives his bread, he must retire without his supper. If he gives all that he has, it will afford but a scanty pittance to this starving family; but he gives it instantly. He gives it joyfully, and absolutely retires to bed without his supper, with tears of joy and gratitude, that by denying himself he has been able to keep a fatherless family from absolute starvation. This is self-denial. It was self-denial in God to send his Son to die for sinners, and self-denial in Christ to undertake and accomplish the great work of man's salvation.

5. Here it should be remembered, that if what we possess will be less beneficial to others than to ourselves, or if depriving ourselves of any thing will promote the good of others less than it will detract from our own, enlightened benevolence would forbid the sacrifice. For example--it would not be enlightened benevolence for a man to give up his life for a mere brute. For a man's life and happiness are worth more than the life and happiness of a beast. Nor would it be virtuous in a man to starve himself for the sake of feeding his dog.

6. Every sacrifice of lawful enjoyment, of ease, convenience, health, time, talents, property, reputation, and whatever might be lawfully enjoyed, from a disinterested desire to promote the glory of God and the greater good of the universe, is self-denial.

7. In short, self-denial implies, the death of selfishness. That is--self-denial and selfishness cannot exist in the mind at the same time. They are exact opposite states of mind.

IV. What is not taking up the cross.

1. It does not consist in the performance of the social and public duties of religion.

2. Nor in crossing the bodily appetites for the good of the soul.

3. Nor in crossing our pride for the good of our soul.

4. Nor in crossing any of our inclinations for the same reason.

5. Nor in crossing ourselves in any respect, nor in any degree, for any selfish reason whatever.

6. Nor does it consist in submitting to any kind or degree of evil, persecution, or privation, for any legal or selfish reason, with respect either to our temporal or eternal interests; for all such things are only some modifications of selfishness.

V. What is taking up the cross.

1. It consists in crossing self, from disinterested benevolence.

2. It consists in suffering reproach and persecution meekly and joyfully, for the same reason; that is--from true benevolence to men and supreme love to God.

3. It consists in crossing natural and artificial appetites and inclinations, lest their indulgence should dishonor God and injure the souls of men; and that by thus crossing ourselves we may possess the means and opportunities of doing a greater amount of good to others. Thus bearing the cross is only a modification of self-denial. There is but a shade of difference between self-denial and cross-bearing. And this is true of all the Christian graces. They are only modifications of one great principle, benevolence.

VI. What is implied in taking up the cross.

1. It implies true holiness of heart, or disinterested benevolence to God and man; just as self-denial does.

2. It implies deadness to the influence of appetite, to the influence of the world, and to a regard to reputation. A man will never take up the cross, in the denial or crossing of his appetites and in meekly suffering persecution and reproach, unless he has become dead to such things.

3. Cross-bearing implies the death of selfishness in general.

4. It implies true faith or confidence in Christ. Certainly no man will bear the cross of Christ, and patiently and joyfully suffer persecution for his sake, unless he has great confidence in Christ.

5. It implies such an attachment to Christ as to be willing to suffer shame, and the total loss of reputation in the world, for his sake.

6. It implies the doing of this with joy, and not reluctantly. It is said of the Apostles when they were scourged by the Sanhedrim, and almost hissed through the streets of Jerusalem, that they departed "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

7. It implies a state of mind that is ready to forsake all things, and endure all things, for his sake, as an affectionate wife would forsake all things, and joyfully go into banishment with her husband, and count herself happy in so doing; feeling, that if her husband was spared to her, it mattered little of what else she was deprived. In short, the true spirit of cross-bearing for the sake of Christ, is a state of mind that feels Christ to be such an all-sufficient portion as to perfectly satisfy the soul, in the absence of all things else.

VII. What following after Christ is not.

1. It is not a change of place. When Christ was upon earth, following Him might imply going after Him, from town to town, to attend upon his personal instructions. But even then, the mere following Him from place to place, was not what was intended; for it was the state of mind upon which the Savior had his eye. Then a man might have followed Him from place to place with selfish motives. And following Christ, in the text, implies a certain state of mind.

2. It does not consist in following Him for reward, as he accused some in his own day, of following Him for the loaves and fishes.

3. It does not consist in any service of any kind rendered from any legal or selfish motives. Christ was not selfish; and no selfish mind can in any proper sense be said to follow Him.

4. It does not consist in imitating his life, from any fear of evil, or hope of reward. He was influenced by no such motives.

VIII. What following after Christ is.

1. It consists in having the same mind, spirit, motive, and end that Christ has.

2. It consists in being as truly and as disinterestedly devoted to the glory of God and the good of the universe as He is.

3. Following Christ is to possess the zeal and activity of the Son of God, in promoting this great end.

4. It consists in denying self as Christ did, for the glory of God and the good of men.

5. It consists in using the same means, from the same motives, with the same diligence, and in the same temper of mind, for the promotion of the same end.

6. In short, it consists in imitating his example, both as it respects the spirit and life, together with the motives for exertion.

IX. What is implied in following after Christ.

1. Following Christ implies great confidence in Him.

2. It implies self-renunciation. A man must renounce himself, before he will follow Christ. Christ pleased not Himself. He sought not his own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Him. Hence, let no man think that he follows Christ, until he has renounced himself.

3. It implies a trust in Him for the supply of all our wants. It is the giving up of our own interest as the object of pursuit, and devoting ourselves to the glory of God and the good of the universe; cheerfully and confidently leaving our own good and all our interests to be provided for and disposed of by Him.

4. Following Christ, then, implies the death of selfishness.

5. It implies not merely and negatively the death of selfishness, but also true holiness of heart and life; or a supreme, disinterested benevolence to God, and equal benevolence to men.

6. It implies the final forsaking of all else for his sake--the everlasting renunciation of all ways, ends, employments, and things, inconsistent with the glory of God and the highest good of men, from truly disinterested love to Him and to the souls of men.

7. Daily following Christ implies, that it is not a mere experiment, for a day, or a month, but an embarkation for eternity; an eternal committing of the whole being to the same great end that Christ is pursuing.

8. Observe, the text assures you, that you must daily take up your cross and follow Christ. It is to be a permanent state of mind; a state of mind in opposition to a single exercise.

X. These are indispensable conditions of salvation.

1. Because nothing short of this is virtue.

2. Because any thing short of this but confirms selfishness.

3. The nature of the case shows, that these conditions are naturally indispensable to salvation. The prime idea of salvation is deliverance from sin, and confirmation in a state of holiness. And as those states of mind called self-denial, bearing the cross, and following Christ, are holiness itself, it is self-evident, that they are naturally indispensable to salvation.

4. The text itself is an affirmation, and a confirmation of this truth. "He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross DAILY, and follow me."

REMARKS.

1. From this subject, it is easy to perceive the mistake of those who suppose that self-denial implies selfishness. In preaching, a few years since, in the congregation of a brother minister, I had occasion to remark, upon the self-denial of God in the work of Atonement. Some of the members of the church were disturbed, with the idea that God could exercise self-denial, supposing that self-denial implied selfishness, and that none but a selfish being could deny self. I was informed, that one of them went to his minister, to see whether he accorded with me in my views of self-denial. He informed him that he did not agree with me, and that he thought it wrong to affirm that God exercised self-denial, inasmuch as it implied selfishness in God. Now it pains me to be obliged to say, that for a long time it has been growing more and more evident to my mind, from personal observation, reading, reflection, and prayer, that to a most alarming extent, the very nature of the Christian graces is radically mistaken by the Church and by multitudes of ministers--that in innumerable cases mere emotion is mistaken for religion--and that to an extent truly shocking, selfishness, in one or another of its modifications, is mistaken for true piety. Not long since, the question was seriously proposed by a brother, as a question to be considered and discussed, whether a mind in a state of entire sanctification could exercise self-denial at all, and whether any thing could be possibly called self-denial in one who is entirely benevolent. Now what a wonderful mistake is this. What? Query, whether a benevolent mind can exercise self-denial! Why, it is the most manifest thing in the universe, that self-denial implies benevolence, and that that cannot be self-denial that does not deny self, from motives of disinterested benevolence. It is, therefore, so far from being true, that self-denial implies selfishness, that selfishness is entirely inconsistent with self-denial. They are exactly opposite states of mind, and can no more co-exist than light and darkness can co-exist. This mistake is very extensively made in the Church; and I do not hesitate to say, that in just as far as it is made, it is a fundamental error. It is putting darkness for light, and sin for holiness; and I must confess, it is extremely difficult for me to understand how a mind that has ever truly exercised self-denial, could fall into so strange a mistake--how a man who has ever known what it was to deny himself, from disinterested benevolence, should ever afterwards suppose that self-denial implied selfishness--and that to deny one form of selfishness for the sake of gratifying another form could be self-denial.

2. True self-denial implies entire consecration, or entire sanctification. I do not speak now of continued, or permanent, but of present sanctification. To deny self from motives of disinterested benevolence, is for the

time being to obey God. It is to do your duty. In other words, it is to be in a state of entire conformity to the will of God. Nothing short of this is denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ.

3. The fact that so few persons know what self-denial is, by their own experience, shows how few there are who exercise self-denial.

4. It would seem as if ministers are the only men, in the estimation of the Church, who are expected really to exercise any self-denial. They only are expected to labor without wages, from motives of disinterested benevolence. The churches do not pretend, in scarcely any case, to give the ministers any thing like a compensation for their labors. And in multitudes of cases they give them nothing at all. They feel as if ministers are to labor for the glory of God and the good of souls, and not for "filthy lucre." It seems to be generally understood, what self-denial in ministers is. It seems to be known, that they are to labor from motives of disinterested benevolence. They may visit the sick, and spend as much time as the physician, or more than he does, without its being so much as dreamed by any one, that they ought to have any compensation for this expenditure of time and strength. They may travel about the country, and, at the earnest request of the churches, spend a Sabbath, a week, or even a number of weeks, in laboring almost night and day, until they are prostrated and ready to die with fatigue, without so much perhaps as their traveling expenses being paid. In all this they are expected to labor from disinterested benevolence. They will spend as much time and strength in promoting the good of souls, as a lawyer would do in attending to secular affairs, where his charge would be five hundred or a thousand dollars; and if the minister should ask for a dollar of compensation he would be accused of selfishness, and laboring for "filthy lucre;" while it would not be so much as expected, that a lawyer or a physician would expend so much time and strength, without charging enough to buy him a farm. Now the question is, how comes there to be such a public sentiment as this? What would be said of a minister, if he made a charge of attending on the sick and officiating at funerals--if he should charge as physicians charge, or as lawyers charge, for services rendered at home or abroad. And should he do this, when he has no salary and no earthly means of support, it would not alter the case in the public estimation; but he would be denounced as a hireling, a selfish, and an ungodly minister. Now I ask again, how came such a public sentiment as this to exist in the Church and in the world? I answer, it is founded in this fundamental mistake, that ministers, and ministers alone, are expected to serve God and men from motives of disinterested benevolence.--That ministers are bound to do all they can to glorify God and save the souls of men, whether they receive any earthly compensation or not, I admit and fully maintain.

I also maintain, that the churches are as solemnly bound to contribute to their support, and give them what is reasonable and just for their services as they are to support their own families, to pay their physician's bill, or the laborer that tills their ground. I am not advocating the principle, that ministers should either be allowed, or find it necessary to make a charge for preaching a sermon, a Sabbath, a week, or a month, or for visiting the sick, or for any such services. But I intend to maintain, that for all these services, they have the same right to expect a compensation from men, as lawyers, doctors, merchants, and mechanics have--that all other men are bound to be as self-denying, to perform all their services from as disinterested motives--to be willing to spend and be spent, and used all up in works of benevolence, just as ministers are bound to do. Any man, and every man has a right to expect such compensation for his labors as is reasonable and just, under the circumstances of the case. But no man has in any instance a right to make his wages the end at which he aims, and that without which he would not perform the service. The minister is to preach and labor for the glory of God and the good of souls, and not for the sake of a salary. The mechanic, the merchant, the lawyer, the physician, are all to do the same. And no one of them has a right

to demand or expect any compensation, when, under similar circumstances a minister might not do the same. And now the thing I wish to impress upon your minds is this, that this public sentiment of which I am speaking reveals this alarming fact, that the Church has to a great extent lost sight of that which constitutes true religion in every body else but ministers. They expect and insist upon that in ministers, which really constitutes true religion; but that which they expect of themselves, and require of others than ministers, is nothing but sheer selfishness. They have set up one standard for ministers, and another for laymen and women. And this last has not a particle of true religion in it; for selfishness is the substance and essence of all sin; and disinterested benevolence is the substance of all true religion. And in such a world as this, to say the least, there cannot be any true religion without true self-denial. And what shall we say, when the real spirit of self-denial is so far lost sight of, and misunderstood, that only so far as it is applicable to ministers, does it seem to be recognized as even obligatory.

5. But no man can be saved, without the true self-denial for the good of others, which he feels that a minister ought to exercise. Whatever be your calling, except you pursue it from as disinterested motives, as much for the glory of God and the good of men, as you feel and know that ministers ought to do, you cannot by any possibility be saved. The same rule is applicable to both. What will ruin a minister's soul will ruin your soul. The requirement with respect to both is, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And now let me ask you, in how many instances have you charged and received pay for services, when it would in your own estimation have ruined a minister to have done the same? Would you not feel an abhorrence of and contempt for a minister, and be one of the first to complain, and avow your convictions of his hypocrisy, should he charge for his services as you have charged for yours, and show the same reluctance to laboring without wages as you yourself do.

6. From this subject it is easy to see, that self-denial does not abridge the happiness of those who exercise it; but that, on the contrary, it is the readiest way to promote it. To be sure, our own happiness must not be the object at which we aim; for this would not be self-denial. The Lord Jesus Christ has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and it is truly blessed to deny self for the good of others. Take the case of the man who gave the loaf to the starving family, of whom I have already spoken, and tell me, did he not experience a more noble, elevated, and soul-satisfying happiness, in saving that famishing family from starvation, than he would have done to have eaten the bread himself, although hungry and really needing it? Who can doubt it, if he was really benevolent and disinterested? I do not hesitate to say, that he who can doubt it, knows not what benevolence and self-denial are. Just so it is with all acts of real self-denial. They always afford the mind more satisfaction than an opposite course would have done; that is--the denying of self, for the sake of doing good to others, is that course of conduct most supremely pleasing and gratifying to a benevolent mind. To suppose the contrary, is a downright absurdity, a contradiction, and an overlooking of the very nature of benevolence and self-denial.

7. True self-denial is wholly indispensable to happiness in this world. Certainly a man cannot be happy, in any proper sense of the word, who is not benevolent. But if he is truly benevolent, in such a world as this, the wants, and woes, and ignorance, and wickedness of those around him, would keep him in a state of unspeakable agony, unless he were making self-denying efforts to do them good. Can a man act continually against the supreme, the strongest affection of his soul, without being made wretched by it? No, he cannot. Then a truly religious man, in other words, a man who is truly and disinterestedly benevolent, cannot be at peace with himself, only so far as he lays himself out for the glory of God and the good of men. I might indeed say this of all men, whether they are benevolent or not. But it is absurd, and a contradiction, to say, that in a world of wo and want like this, a truly benevolent mind can be otherwise

than miserable, only as it puts forth the most strenuous exertions to relieve the woes, instruct the ignorance, and save the souls of men.

8. It is impossible that a truly benevolent mind, a truly religious man, should not exercise self-denial in a world like this. Benevolence is good willing. It is willing or choosing the good of others, in proportion to its relative value. The will governs the conduct. If a man, therefore, wills the good of the community in which he lives, more than he does his own individual good; if he loves his neighbor as himself, and all his neighbors as much more than he loves himself as their happiness is more valuable than his own; it is as impossible that he should not exercise self-denial for their good, as it is that he should act against his will. This brings out the demonstration that no man is a truly religious man who does not live a life of self-denial.

9. From this subject we see why it is, that so many seem to suppose that self-denial must necessarily abridge our own happiness. It certainly is only because they do not understand what self-denial is. They call that legal constrained giving up one form of selfishness for another self-denial. When they are really whipped out of some form of selfishness, and driven by the terrors of conscience, the thunders of Sinai, or a regard to reputation, to deny themselves some indulgence, for the sake of avoiding some great evil, or attaining some great good, they call this self-denial. And being conscious, that it is to them a grievous privation and vexation, they of course suppose that self-denial is a great burden. I have often thought, that most professors of religion secretly feel as if God's service was a hard service; as if Christ's yoke was hard, instead of being easy; and his burden heavy instead of being light--that wisdom's ways are not, in their estimation, "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace;" that religion is a task, an irksome, difficult, up-hill, laborious business. It is fully manifest, that that which many call religion is really such a heavy burden; but is this the religion of the Bible? Is it true religion at all? No it is slavery, legality, selfishness, death! Enough of it would make up the very essence of hell!

10. The real enjoyment of self-denial is the true criterion by which its character may and must be tested. If you do not enjoy it--if it is not a real pleasure to you--that in which you delight and choose for its own sake--if, as a matter of fact, in any particular case it is not more grateful to you than any other course it is no true self-denial, but only selfishness. Be sure to remember, that self-denial consists in denying self, from motives of disinterested benevolence. If, then, you deny yourself, from such a motive, it must of necessity promote your happiness; as it is doing the thing you supremely love to do. Let it be for ever remembered, then, that that is not self-denial, which does not promote your present happiness more than self-gratification would have done. But here again, let it be noticed, that your own happiness must not be the object at which you aim; else it is not self-denial, but self-gratification, which you practice. There is a distinction as broad as daylight, ever to be remembered, between pursuing and finding your happiness in the duties of religion.

11. You see from this subject that God can and has exercised self-denial in the great work of Atonement, and probably in innumerable instances in the creation and government of the universe.

12. You see from this subject the great self-denial of Christ in all his sufferings and labors for the glory of God and the good of man.

13. We see that in all probability the holy angels have exercised and do continue to exercise great self-denial for the same object. The Apostle informs us that the angels "are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Now in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness, in all their journeyings to and fro--in all their watchings over, and laboring for the good of the saints, they are no doubt called to frequent acts of self-denial--to be absent from scenes in heaven that might greatly interest and benefit them--to forego many privileges, and endure much toil that is real self-denial for the sake of saving men.

14. We see that no one needs to pity those who are called to great self-denial for the glory of God and the good of men, for it is to them a real source of happiness. It is to them a greater good than any other course they could pursue. Christ is spoken of in the Bible as really enjoying the work of Atonement. It is said that "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross despising the shame." By this I do not suppose we are to understand that his personal enjoyment was the great end He had in view; but simply that as a matter of fact He counted it a pleasure and a joyful undertaking to deny Himself and bear the pains of death for sinful men. So in the case of the Apostles and primitive saints and martyrs. Their self-denial was to them a source of real and soul-satisfying enjoyment. Paul speaks of being exceedingly joyful in all his tribulations.

15. We are nevertheless under great obligations of gratitude to those who exercise self-denial for our good, and under the greater obligation by how much the more happiness they experience in self-denial. If they did what they do grudgingly, and in such a temper as to find no happiness in it, just in that proportion we might be certain that they were not disinterested and did not aim with a single eye at promoting our good. They are happy precisely in proportion to their disinterestedness. They are happy in denying themselves for our good in just as far as they are virtuous and really aim at our good instead of their own. Hence it follows that we are under obligations of gratitude precisely in proportion to the real happiness they experience in laboring for our good.

16. You see it is a great mistake to suppose that if God and the angels and the saints really find a superlative pleasure in serving us, that this diminishes aught of our obligation to make what return we can for their labors of love. If a minister loves you well enough to labor for your good from disinterested motives, and really enjoys his labor even more than you do in receiving his instructions, nay, if he is made supremely happy in laboring day and night for your good, insomuch that he asks nothing, expects nothing, and desires nothing for his labor, it by no means follows that you are under no obligations of gratitude, and to bestow such temporal goods upon him as may add to his comfort or usefulness, or the usefulness or comfort of his family. Why, beloved, because the Father freely gave up his Son for us all; because He did it joyfully, willingly; because He found an infinite satisfaction in it; because the blessed Son of God gave his back to the smiters and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair; because he gave Himself an offering for sin, and found a superlative pleasure in becoming for your sake a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; because he could delight to die for you, and drink of the bitter cup prepared for you, do you suppose yourselves relieved from obligations to love and serve and glorify Him forever? Nay, who does not know that for these very reasons your obligations to gratitude are infinitely increased.

17. Let no one hope for salvation who does not live a life of daily self-denial. Observe what Christ says in the text: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." It is not sufficient then to practice occasional self-denial. Self must be set aside and crucified, and denied daily and continually. Your happiness must consist in disinterested endeavors to make others happy, or you never can be saved. I beg of you to understand this. Denying yourself daily, taking up your cross daily, and following Christ daily, are indispensable conditions of salvation. And the doing of this daily is as indispensable as doing it at all. Observe, Christ does not say, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself occasionally; take up the cross occasionally; and occasionally, in seasons of special excitement

and revival follow me; but the doing of these things daily is here expressly made an indispensable condition of salvation. Let me impress this upon you, for it seems generally to be understood, that if persons go so far as now and then to practice what they call self-denial--now and then to take up some cross, and occasionally, in seasons of special revival, follow Christ--that these are the conditions of salvation, and about as much as can be expected of Christians in this world. Now mark, this common opinion is a fatal error. The unalterable condition of salvation is, that these things shall be done daily--that this shall be the state of the mind, and the habitual course of life--that self-interest shall be rejected as the grand end of life--that self shall be daily denied, and that daily you shall bear the cross and follow Christ.

18. Let it also be noticed that bearing the cross implies dying to our own reputation, and this is to be habitual, the daily abiding state of our hearts. It does not say merely that once in a while we shall have a season of humiliation, breaking down before God, and making ourselves of no reputation; but it implies so thorough a death to our own reputation, as that this regardlessness to our own reputation shall be the habitual state of our minds.

19. Observe that following after Christ must also be daily. You must daily aim at the same end from the same motives that He does. You must give up all your powers to the promotion of this end as He does. And this is to be done daily as an unalterable condition of salvation.

20. How infinitely diverse from this are the general notions of professing Christians in respect to the conditions of salvation. The general idea of professors of religion seems to be that if they only once in a while wake up as they call it--if they are revived now and then, at long intervals, and once in a while bluster about, and perform their duty as they call it, this will suffice as a sufficient ground of hope. And living in this way they expect to be saved. How amazing it is, that with the express declaration of Christ before them, they can dare to hope in the face of his most solemn declarations. Why, professor of religion, as sure as your soul lives, such loose notions as those that are common among professors of religion in respect to the conditions of salvation, will if you trust to them, land your soul in the depths of hell. I say again, remember that the daily doing of these things is just as expressly and indispensably a condition, as that you should do them at all. What then do you mean, to dream of eternal life while you indulge your selfishness and lust, with only now and then a spasmodic effort, when conscience can remain no longer silent, and the Spirit of God forces upon you the conviction that you are one of the greatest sinners out of hell. Then you set to blustering about and seem to suppose yourself to be religious enough in a few weeks to set off against years of selfishness and lust. Why, what do you mean?

21. How ridiculous it is for persons to call such things as they often do, self-denial and bearing the cross. Some persons will abandon the use of alcohol because its use has become disreputable, or because it is injurious to their health, or because their conscience torments them in the use of it, or because they fear they shall become drunkards, disgrace and ruin themselves, and lose their souls. And this they call self-denial, when it is after all, only denying one form of selfishness for the sake of gratifying another form. In other words, they are denying one form of selfishness for the sake of promoting self-interest on a larger scale. "Verily they have their reward." Others will abandon the use of tea, coffee, tobacco, and many such-like articles, for similar reasons, and call it self-denial. But who cannot see through this?

22. Others call it taking up the cross to pray in female prayer meetings, to speak in public, or do any thing that mortifies their pride. Now, it should be known that taking up the cross implies the death of pride--that pride or a regard to our own reputation is already dead. If this is not so, it is nonsense to talk of taking up the cross.

23. Our Lord Jesus Christ differed radically from multitudes of reformers. Reformers in general seem to aim at making as many proselytes to their peculiar views as possible, and are not wont to be so particular and searching as to render it very difficult for persons to fall in with and adopt their views. But Christ on the contrary, when multitudes seemed to be converted, professed to believe in Him, and to follow Him, would turn upon them and cut to the very quick, informing them plainly that they could not be his disciples at all unless they forsook all that they had; unless they would deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him--that no man could be his disciple unless he would not only forsake all that he had, but would hate his dearest earthly relations, and even his own life for Christ's sake.

This certainly was a very different policy from that which is pursued by many ministers of the gospel. They, instead of insisting upon daily self-denial, the renunciation of selfishness, and a life of entire consecration to God, as indispensable conditions of salvation and church membership, seem to leave these express conditions of Christ almost entirely out of view. And for the sake of increasing the members of the Church, practically at least, hold out very different, and almost infinitely lower conditions of salvation.

Brethren, how dare you do this? I ask you solemnly before God and the Savior Jesus Christ if you do insist upon a life of daily self-denial, cross-bearing, and following Christ--if you do insist that unless men forsake all that they have and renounce selfishness in their business transactions and in all their ways, and that unless they live a life of entire consecration to God, they can by no possibility be saved, and have no right to a standing in the Church of God? Do let me ask what is the practical standard to which some of you, my brethren, as a matter of fact require persons to conform as conditions of church-membership and of salvation?

Do you not virtually plead for and allow sin? Do you not virtually deny or leave out of view the great truth upon which Christ every where and so often insisted, that "except a man forsake all that he hath, deny himself and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple?" Instead of making this a condition of salvation as Christ does, I ask you my brethren, and I ask the churches who hear you preach if some of you do not virtually maintain or make the impression that a state of entire consecration to God, is so far from being an indispensable condition of salvation, that it is as a matter of fact never attained in this world; or at least, that it is never attained as a state in which men do as a matter of fact for any length of time continue?

Now my beloved brethren, if this is true, let me get down at your feet, and beseech you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to consider what you are doing. How many of you are afraid to admit, avow, and maintain the doctrine of entire sanctification or consecration to God in this life? You are even afraid to allow that this state is ever attained and continued for any length of time by the best saints that ever lived on earth. But let me ask you, is not this state as a state made by the Lord Jesus Christ in these passages that I have so often quoted, an express and indispensable condition of salvation?

If it is not, I beg of you, and conjure you to show what these passages do mean. What does Christ mean when he says "except a man forsake all that he hath he cannot be my disciple?" The Lord willing, I intend soon to give the Church my views of this declaration of Christ. When I say that this as a state is insisted on by the Lord Jesus Christ as an indispensable condition of salvation, I do not mean that the condition is that no occasional sin through the force of temptation is consistent with a state of real grace and with final salvation; but I do mean and maintain, that a state of entire consecration to God, or sanctification as a habitual state of mind is in the gospel, insisted upon as an indispensable condition of salvation; and that it is so far from being true, that this state as a state, with only occasional interruptions through the force of

temptation, is never attained by the saints in this life, that under the gospel no one can be saved, nor ever has been saved, who has not attained and lived, and died in this state; a state in which entire sanctification is the rule, and sin only the exception.

If this is not the doctrine of these texts, I ask what is? Do not understand me now to affirm that a person's falling into occasional sins through the force of temptation is fatal to his salvation; but I do wish to be understood as affirming that regeneration itself is an act of entire consecration to God--that a state of entire consecration to God is the habitual state of every real saint; and that nothing less than entire consecration to God, as a habitual state of mind ought to be insisted on as a condition of salvation. To make the impression that any thing less than this can ensure salvation is false, anti-christian, and at war with every principal of the gospel.

And now if this is so, how much blood is already in the skirts of the ministry. My brethren, I feel as if I for one ought to look to this--that I am bound to look not only to some, but to all the conditions of salvation as laid down by Christ in the gospel, and that as I value my own soul and souls of my hearers--as I value the approbation, and dread the wrath of God, I am bound to lay down no other conditions of salvation, either in doctrine or practice, than this; that unless a man forsake all that he hath--except he deny himself and take up his cross and follow Christ daily, he cannot be saved. My brethren, dare any of us require in theory or in practice any thing short of this? If we can, we are building upon Christ's foundation, wood, hay and stubble, and in the day that shall try every man's work what it is, the fruits of his labor shall be burned up.

24. What an infinitely terrible thing it is for ministers and professors of religion to be engaged in opposing the doctrine of entire sanctification or consecration to God in this life. I am amazed and distressed beyond measure to hear them speak of the dangerous tendencies of preaching this doctrine. I find it impossible to express the pain that sometimes comes over my mind when I see them hunting after and eagerly seizing upon every thing which they suppose exhibits the dangerous tendency of this doctrine. At the same time overlooking the world of facts most distressing and appalling that bring out with the force of a thousand demonstrations the dreadful tendency of the opposite doctrine. My brethren, would it not be well for us to look a little upon the other side of this question and see what is the actual tendency as developed in myriads of facts of preaching that a state of entire and continued consecration to God is not to be expected or attained in this life. Why is it that such great re-action follows revivals of religion? Why is it that the truth of the gospel can bring people along so far as to effect their conversion and then leave them to backslide. I answer unhesitatingly, that beyond that point the gospel is not preached. Instead of holding up the perfect standard of the gospel as a thing to be aimed at, actually attained and maintained, as an indispensable condition of salvation, instead of being encouraged to go right on to perfection until they stand and remain complete in all the will of God, no such end is presented to them, no such object of pursuit or of expectation is held up before them. But on the contrary it is either expressly insisted or strongly intimated that no such state ever was or ever is expected to be attained in this life. And thus discouragement is thrown in their way. A stumbling block is laid before them that just as certainly results in their backsliding as any cause produces its effect.

My dear brethren in the ministry, who among you dare to quote and enforce with the expectation that it will take effect, the following language of Paul: "Ye are the temples of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,

perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Now, my brethren will you suffer me to ask, whether you follow the example of Paul, whether in view of the exceeding great and precious promises, you do exhort, encourage, and command Christians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God? Observe the Apostle expected them to do this in this world; for it was "from all filthiness of the flesh," as well as "spirit" that they were to cleanse themselves. Now my beloved brethren, do you and do your churches know that you explain to them what this and similar passages mean? Do you make the impression that you expect them to do this, as you do upon sinners that you expect them to repent? How dare you, with this and multitudes of similar passages before you, stumble and talk as some of you do about the doctrine of Christian perfection? Why, some of you seem to be horrified at the very idea of expecting Christians to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The very term Christian Perfection seems to be an abomination to you, and a thing neither to be understood nor seriously insisted upon as a truth and a command of God. O, my brethren, I ask you how you dare to do this? How can you find it in your heart to do it? Will you consider these texts and tell your churches what they mean?-- Will you expound, enforce, and crowd them home, and expect your churches to receive and obey these truths? Why, how can it be possible that so many of the professed ministers of Christ are stumbling at, opposing, and even ridiculing the doctrine of Christian Perfection? My soul trembles for you. It would seem as if your attention was so taken up with the fancied dangers of enforcing the doctrine and duty of Christian Perfection, that you count it an arrant heresy, for any man to teach or expect Christians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and this in the face of the church.--My brethren, is this the work of the gospel ministry?

About a year ago there was a powerful revival in a church not far distant from this. In the fulness of my heart I wrote to my brethren who were engaged in promoting it, beseeching them to insist upon total abstinence from sin and to press the converts up to a state of entire and continued consecration to God. I insisted upon this as the only course they could take to secure the revival against a reaction. I felt at the time agonized with the thought that there should be a reaction in that place, and could have washed the feet of the brethren with my tears, if it could have availed to persuade them so to press the converts up to a habitual state of entire consecration, as to have prevented their backsliding. But all in vain. Within a few weeks or months, the pastor began to preach himself and suffer others to preach against the doctrine of Christian Perfection in his pulpit. The result was just what might have been anticipated with as much certainty as any other event whatever. And now, although scarce a year has elapsed since the revival was all in its glory, I have heard with unutterable pain that the pastor has confessed in public, that out of the many converts that joined his church, only a comparatively small number of them are ever seen in his meetings. And yet this same dear brother seems to be still alarmed only at the tendency of preaching the doctrine of entire sanctification or consecration to God in this life. Strange to tell, he sees not, feels not, acknowledges not, the awful tendency of preaching as he has preached, and maintaining that it is a dangerous error to expect to live in a state of entire sanctification to the will of God in this life. O tell it not in Gath; let not the sound reach Askalon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. Toward this brother, toward all of my ministerial brethren, I have none but feelings of the utmost tenderness. But yet I am grieved and pained, my soul is sick with the course that many of them are taking. Afraid to do as Paul did, press the church right up to cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God, they merely satisfy themselves with saying it is a duty, it is naturally possible, but still not to be expected. Is this like Paul? Is this like Christ? Paul would say, come on, "having these promises, dearly beloved, let us, (for we can do it and must do it,) cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And Christ could say, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." And yet, O dreadful to say, multitudes of ministers

are opposing and even ridiculing the doctrine of Christian Perfection or entire consecration to God in this life, holding it up as a dangerous heresy, and even denying ministerial and Christian fellowship to those that believe it. Oh what a state of things is this!

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