

We Must Die in Order to Live

by Hans Peter Royer

We must choose to surrender our lives to Christ and submit to His will in order to experience God's presence and power in our lives.

Duration: 26:00

Scripture: Matthew 10:39, John 12:24-25, Colossians 3:3

Topics: "Dying To Self", "Surrendered Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the verse John 12:24 where Jesus talks about the concept of dying to oneself in order to produce fruit. The preacher highlights the paradox that as Christians, we desire to be close to God, but in order to do so, we must be willing to let go of our own desires and preferences. The preacher shares a personal story of a man named Julio who experienced physical abuse as a child, which deeply affected his Christian life. The preacher also emphasizes the importance of obedience and faith in God's instructions, using the example of the man with the shriveled hand in Luke 4. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to surrender their lives to God and trust in His plan for their lives.

Transcript

John chapter 12, and verse 24. The Lord Jesus says here, I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. The Lord Jesus says, the man who wants to keep his life will lose it, if you lose it, you will keep it. I believe it's an interesting paradox that as Christians, on one hand, we all, and I believe this is one reason why you're here, we all want to be close to God, we want to be near God, we want to feel God.

But you know what, there is another tendency. On the other side, we sometimes are afraid to come too close to God. And we rather have a little distance of God.

As I heard one pastor once say, leave God in heaven. You know, keep a little distance. Because we are afraid, if he comes too close, he might intervene in areas that I don't want him to intervene.

It's a certain, it's almost schizophrenic. Why are we afraid to come too close to God at times? I often tell this story about, there was a girl actually, she's from Australia, she might be here, is Helen here? Helen Jeffery, is she around? Then I can tell the story, you know. But many years ago, she came to Austria, and

she was not a believer, and she told me so.

And I said, well, you can still come, that's fine, as long as you, you know, do kind of the things that we expect you to do. And she said, yes, she will. So she did come, a great girl, she did very well.

But whenever I spoke about the Lord, whenever I had a devotion or whatever, she would always just look into the floor. She would never respond to anything about Christ. And I remember it was the very last week, she was with us for six months, the very last week before she left, she came into my office for whatever reason, and I just asked her, I said, why do you always look into the ground and just try, act as though you are absent when we talk about the Lord? And after a bit of a longer talk, she said, I'm afraid if I accept Jesus, I lose my identity.

That was her fear. And then I asked her, what are you afraid of losing? And of course, I said, who are you? She said, well, I'm Helen, I'm afraid that I lose to be Helen. I said, well, Helen is just your name, but who are you? Well, I'm Australian.

I said, well, that's your country, but who are you? Well, I want to be a nurse, or whatever she wanted to be. I said, well, that's your profession, but who are you? And then I ran out of questions, she ran out of answers. And this evening, we separated, and I said, Helen, sit down tonight, please, and write down who you are, because I'd like to know what you are afraid of losing.

And tell me tomorrow morning who you are. The next morning, I remember, she came towards me with a big smile, and I was sure that she thought of something else. But she actually said, I gave my life to Christ, because I didn't know who I am.

And now I know who I am, a child of God. But you see, although, as men, we have a deep longing to be close to God, we do have a fear to lose our old life. And even though many people know Christ, they try to keep and find fulfillment in their own identity, in their own life.

And then is the classic phrase that I hear very often in the ministry, when Christians say, I have tried everything, but I cannot feel God. I think, I'm sure, that, at least in my experience, I've found that from whatever angle you look at that problem, whatever problem you have about God, the answer is always the same. And that is, we must first be broken before God can fill us.

I have people say to me, they say, nobody will ever break me. I don't let anyone break me. Well, I have an answer for those people.

You will be broken anyways. Every person will be broken, either by the lie or by God. You see, an egocentric, proud person is already a distorted, a broken person by his pride.

You will always be broken. The question is only by whom. If a man gets broken by God, then God has a chance from the inside out to reveal his character.

Just like pride distorts a person from the inside out in a negative sense. Now we have Good Friday today and the Lord Jesus, as we think of this day in particular, He was broken at and prior to the cross. We read in Matthew 26 that Lord Jesus on the Garden of Gethsemane, He was deeply troubled and afraid.

And He asked His friends to stay with Him but of course they fell asleep. Three times He prayed to the Father Lord, if it's somehow possible do not let me drink this cup yet not my will but Your will be done. And

we read that His sweat fell to the ground like blood.

Now the question is what made Jesus so afraid? Certainly not the physical pain. He could bear that. What made Jesus so afraid was the knowledge and the terror of being separated from His Father from His life.

Although at the same time while He was separated He was in the perfect will of His Father. At the transaction of sin God the Father was not near His Son. He turned His back to the Son.

This is when Jesus cried out, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And here is the thing that is important to understand. In order to keep up the fellowship between the Son and the Father Jesus could have done that. He didn't have to go to the cross.

He could have kept the perfect fellowship with His Father. He could have sent a legion of angels to destroy them and stay in touch with His Father, but here is the point. Had He done that for the rest of eternity He would not be in the will of His Father anymore.

In order to be in the will of His Father the Lord Jesus had to be broken and for Him it meant to be separated from His Father. In other words Jesus could have avoided the cross and leave the world as a garbage dump or He allows Himself to be broken and so save the world. The cross on which Jesus Christ our Lord was broken where He was separated from His Father is the heart of the Gospel together with the Resurrection.

Sometimes we can get so excited about the Resurrection that we forget what was leading to death. And it's my strong conviction if anyone has just to some extent understood the cross he cannot say I've tried it but it didn't work. If anyone says I know one thing he has not understood the cross even in the slightest way.

You know what's interesting to notice you see it in movies you see it in personal talks whenever a believer or unbeliever says where is God in this God forsaken world you know what's interesting somehow the cross is present. The cross seems to be present even in the most tragic and most forsaken moments in this world. There's a very moving story from Eli Wiesel he's quite a famous Jewish man the winner of a Nobel Prize and one of those few who survived the Holocaust.

And he tells a story where in a concentration camp they were forced to watch the hanging of three Jewish people two of those Jewish people were grown up men and one of those Jews was a teenage boy. And as all three of them were led to the gallows and were hanged there the two adult men they died fairly quick but for some reason the little boy struggled on the gallows for half an hour and could not die and they were forced to watch for half an hour this little boy hanging there and Eli Wiesel tells how somebody behind him whispered where is God? where is God? and he felt the same question.

And then he writes somehow from inside there came a quiet voice that says God is hanging there on the gallows Theologian Jürgen Bultmann he said every other answer would have been blasphemy Now the question is this can any other faith any other religion apart from Christ on the cross give an answer to such a question Is it the Lord Jesus when he died on the cross he bore our guilt he bore our sorrows and by his wounds we are healed You see Christ is not only real on the victorious side of life which is the resurrection Christ is just as real in the deepest depth of our life That's the cross He's there on both sides He's done it all A couple of months ago when I was speaking in Germany at a conference there was a woman, she shared the conference she spoke one evening she's a theologian a

psychologist and she lives together with her man in Puerto Rico her name is Aline Westermeyer and she told a story about a little boy called Julio Puerto Rico it was and she told the story she met this man but when this man Julio when he was 8 years old a little boy something was stolen from the neighborhood and everybody was convinced it was Julio who is the thief and his father he was an officer in the army and he came home and he heard that his son has stolen although he didn't and the father says my son will never steal again and he took his boy and took him into the house and he and Julio of course screamed I wasn't the one in zone but he didn't believe him he had to lay on the floor and he gave him 60 lashes with his belt with an iron end after 30 lashes he was so exhausted he had

to rest but he finished it and the boy was almost dead it took him about 2 weeks to get the boy back to life again so to speak and of course this incident left the traces in this boy he came to know the Lord in the mid 20's this Julio through whatever I forgot what it was but he never made it in his Christian life it just never worked depression, all kind of things kept on coming he was about in mid 30's when he met this woman, Aline Westermeyer she was telling the story and of course she's a psychologist so she went with him through his past and of course they came to the incident with his father beating him and so on and he told the whole thing through and then she asked him I thought it was very interesting she asked him please tell the story again but this time take Jesus with you

always take the Lord Jesus with you so he told the story again from the beginning and he said my father is walking with me to the house and she said where is Jesus and they were talking and praying it through and he said Jesus he's on my side he's coming with us so what's next yeah we go in the house and my father tells me to lie down on the floor and so on and she says where is Jesus and after a while he said well he's with me and then he said now my father starts beating me he says where is Jesus and then he said Jesus is lying on the floor instead of me it was interesting because in Julio's life this completely changed his life as a Christian more than his rebirth but I believe what we need to understand is that the crucifixion and Christ on the cross is not only a historical thing of

course it is but it's irrelevant today he bore our sorrows by his wounds we are healed and I like to sometimes read Philip Yancey if you heard about him but he said a good quote he said the way God works he says God holds back he is hiding he cries, why? because he is longing for something that can never be reached with power he is a king who does not want forceful submission but love therefore he chose the slow and hard way of becoming a man he chose the way to love and death instead of forcing Rome Jerusalem and all powers of the world into its knees it was a conquest beginning from the inside it's a conquest beginning from the inside don't you sometimes ask I asked myself that the other day Lord Jesus why don't you just come down and do some great miracle why don't you just reveal

yourself in some mighty way that everybody can see who you are but as Charles quoted in the previous lecture remember what the Lord Jesus says by this the world will know that you are my disciples if you love one another you know why I want miracles so that I don't have to love as much if God chose himself with miracles with great power I can just stand on the side and say to these non-believers you see I told you but that's not the way that the Lord Jesus is choosing he chooses the slow and the hard way the way of love and I don't believe it changes until he returns because that's the way that the Lord Jesus is he does not want forceful submission he wants to change us from the inside out when you feel nothing of the Lord Jesus when your faith has become dull and boring let me ask you

this one question have you ever come to the cross knowing that you must choose one life either your own which you want to keep or the life of Christ we hear a lot today about Christ having died on the cross for

our sin but we hear very little that we are crucified with Christ that our life is not our own you do not belong to yourself but to Christ and this is where we need to make a decision we either come to the cross and submit surrender to the Lord Jesus or you turn your back as a Christian walk away from the cross and then comes the famous question I cannot feel God there is one lie that Christians love to believe you know what it is Christians love to believe that they can keep their old life and at the same time be near God that's a lie if you want to keep your own life I know one

thing about you you feel nothing of Christ because you can never have both it's one life not two Lord Jesus says the man who loves his life he will lose it the man who loses his life he will gain it the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 10 I just quoted Matthew 10 verse 39 he says whoever finds his life will lose it whoever loses his life for my sake he will find it in Colossians 3 Paul puts it in another way he says Colossians 3 verse 3 for you died by the way do you know that you died have you been at your funeral at your white one I'm serious if you have not been at your funeral you have a problem for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God in Galatians 1 it says I'm crucified with Christ I no longer live Christ lives within me now somebody will say well Hans Bitter that

sounds ok but how can I know that this is true well I want to close with this and remind you that spiritual truth can never be discerned by thinking but only by obedience you see there is a difference between the Greek thinking and the Hebrew thinking in the Greek thinking the recognition of truth comes by reasoning and that's what we have grown up with we reason we reason can it be so and we reason about it if you try to find the truth which is Christ by reasoning you will never find Him the Hebrew way of thinking is different if you want to find the truth in the Hebrew thinking it's only by one way by obedience it says in Exodus I think it's chapter 2 or 3 Moses stands before the burning bush and God says to Moses Moses go to Egypt and you will worship me with all the people on this

mountain if Moses would have reasoned could it be that I worship with all the people of Israel at this mountain he would still be praying today in front of the burning bush how could Moses find out whether what God said is true only by one way obedience he had to go fascinating stories also were Joshua with a couple of million people standing in front of the Jordan and God says to Joshua walk across the Jordan and I can see Joshua saying do you see the river says yes I know walk across the Jordan and I love it because the priests they went first and it says when the first priest put his foot into the water the river stopped running but not before how could they find out whether what God said is true not by praying not by contemplating just by obedience by the way you know it's fascinating

when the priests stepped into the water the water stopped flowing but you know where it stopped flowing about 30 kilometers north at a place called Adam you know what that means the water was still running for a few hours until it was dry same with prayer sometimes we pray you know God does something but maybe 30 kilometers north still flowing but he does it I like the story with a man I think it's Luke 4 with a shriveled hand standing there and says if you can heal me and Jesus says yes I will and he says stretch your hand and I can see this man saying Jesus that's my problem it's shriveled if you heal it I will stretch it the Lord says no I want you to stretch it and then it will be healed it's so beautiful it says and he stretched his hand and he was healed it's always it's always that

way so if you wonder how this works there's only one way to find out by obedience go into it that's my prayer for my own life that's my prayer for you I'm looking forward to what God is doing this weekend Father we thank you for the privilege of belonging to you we thank you for the joys that you have set before us in your son Jesus Christ thank you Lord Jesus that you endured the cross that you were broken

in order to be in the will of God in the perfect will of your Father at the cross where you were separated in fellowship but still united in purpose Father in the same way I pray that we have the courage and the trust and the obedience to allow you to break us to become earthen vessels so that the treasure within us can shine forth Lord Jesus I thank you so much that you endured the

cross but not only that that you rose again that you won the victory over death Father I thank you for the son that you sent by your free choice in order to save us thank you Lord Jesus for your obedience and Lord only you can do and live the life that we are supposed to live so Lord help us to trust you enough to let you break us so that your life can find its fulfillment even in people like us this I pray and trust in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Amen

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