

The Demands of Discipleship

by Tom Shaw

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being savingly and preeminently committed to Jesus Christ, and the need to deny oneself and take up one's cross to follow Him.

Duration: 1:00:53

Scripture: Matthew 10:38, Matthew 16:13-15, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:18, Luke 9:27

Topics: "Discipleship", "Self Denial"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares various stories and illustrations to emphasize the importance of bearing one's cross for God. He mentions a Chinese brother named George Shen who spent 18 years in a prison camp, where he was assigned the task of shoveling human waste. The speaker also recounts the story of two women, Margaret McLaughlin and Margaret Wilson, who were martyred for their faith. Despite facing death by drowning, Margaret McLaughlin saw Christ wrestling in the water, while Margaret Wilson sang praises to God. The sermon emphasizes the need for discipleship, self-denial, and the contrast between worldly self-assertion and the call to follow Jesus.

Transcript

It's a joy for me to be here. I'm slowly losing my voice, as you can hear, so I hope it picks up again. I was a little rest, but it's been a good joy to be here and to share with you.

I'm so grateful to Harald for inviting me to come. I think you're very brave in asking an Irishman to come and preach here at this conference. But thank you for your fellowship.

Thank you for your love. Thank you for what you've meant to me in terms of encouragement. And my heart has been spoken to.

Over the last year, God has been saying to me again and again, you know, brother, you need to take one or two days away, not just two or three years in a row, but a day now and a day again just to be alone with God. That has been God's emphasis in my life in the last year. And I hope that I can put that into practice in the midst of a busy life.

But we just praise God for it. Now, one of the things that I've noticed about this convention is the emphasis on confession of sin. That's an emphasis we desperately need today.

We need to be upfront with God and we need to be upfront with one another. Something wrong between you and a brother, you have to get that right. You have to get it right.

If there's something wrong between you and God, you've got to get that right. But you know, I don't mean this critically, but I have to say it to you. I feel one of the emphasis you, dear men, need to get back in your lives and in your ministry that there's victory in Jesus.

We were singing about that in the last verse of that hymn. And I mentioned that a little last night, but it's a burden in my heart as I've mingled with you and as I've talked with you. And I'm not going to divulge anything that some of you have shared with me in private at all.

But I have to say to you that there's more victory than some of you are aware of. And sometimes we gloat over our sin and we make an issue of our sin when Christ has died to give us victory over it. And the Apostle John, in his epistles, he says, if any man is born of God, he cannot commit sin.

He that is born of God does not knowingly, deliberately commit sin. And the man who is deliberately committing sin, knowingly committing sin and professing to be a Christian has never been born again. He needs to get back to the cross.

He needs to get back to Calvary. He needs to ask God to save him. That's what the Bible says.

I'm not a perfectionist. I'm not a preaching sinless perfection, but that's what the Bible says. John does say that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in it.

And there may be times where we've slipped. There may be times we'll make a little mistake. There may be times when we're overtaken in a fall.

But a person who is knowingly continuing in sin cannot be born again of the Spirit of God. I mentioned last evening of a dear brother in the ministry that I know has had to leave it recently because of adultery. And he tried to stay in the ministry by saying he'd just been overcoming his fault, but he'd been doing it for 12 years.

That's not being overcome. That's not just a fault. That's deliberate, premeditated, continual sin.

And whosoever continues in that, says John, is not born of God. And men, we have got to give God full credit for what he did in the person of his son at Calvary. Jesus died to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And that was a costly sacrifice. We've got to remember that. So while I believe I'm committed to it, I'm totally committed to the whole business of getting sin out and confess before God and getting it dealt with and getting it under the blood that was shed to cleanse it.

I want to say to you that there's victory in Jesus. God did not intend you and me to be groveling, committing sin and going back. That's what the Roman Catholics do.

They commit sin and they go to the confessional and they get forgiven and they go back and they get forgiven and they go back and do it and they go back and back and back. That is not the way of the believer and that's not the way of scripture. Christ came to deal with sin, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And when Paul wrote that great epistle to the Romans, he says in chapter six, being made free from sin, we became the servants of righteousness. And I would ask you to put that emphasis into your ministry. If I chatted with some of you in private and listened to your conversations and things, I just feel that a word I need to say to you as one of God's children, I'm not setting myself on a pedestal and saying I'm not tempted.

C. H. Spurgeon said, you can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building an S in your hair. I don't have any problem with that. I have it.

Let's turn to the word this morning. That's the most important thing. Luke chapter nine.

Thank you for having me with you. Thank you for your fellowship and your love. I take memories of this back with me to Ireland again, when I go back next Monday, God willing.

Pray for us there. We need God's wisdom and we need God's guidance that those who lead us in the political realm will do what's right. And above everything else, that we will experience a day of great spiritual revival and awakening again in our country.

Let's turn to Luke's gospel chapter nine. I'm reading from verse 18. And it came to pass as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him.

And he asked them saying, whom say the people that I am? The answering said, John the Baptist, but some say Elias. And others say that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, but whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, the Christ of God.

And he straightly charged them and commanded them to tell no man that thing saying, the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be slain and be raised the third day. And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross dearly and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it.

But whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantage to begin the whole world and lose himself and be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory and in his father's and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there'll be some standing here, which you'll not see a step till they see the kingdom of God.

Let's pray a little just before I preach. Father, we just ask again, that your blessing will be upon everything that has been done in this place over these days. And anything that has not been of God put it away under the blood.

Father, we pray that those things that have honored thee will be impressed upon our hearts and upon our lives. And we pray that Jesus will be powerfully honored and glorified through these things. That Lord, we earnestly plead that anything that we have said anything that we've done, any attitude that we've shown that has not been of God, that will put it under the blood of Jesus.

We thank you for the merits of that blood. And Father, we plead that blood over our gathering now. And we ask for the help and the aid of thy Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. The message that I want to bring to you this morning is a message that I have kind of promised God that I preach everywhere I go when I'm doing a series. And I want to bring it to you this morning.

I've given it the title, The Demands of Discipleship. We hear a lot about discipleship today. You go through any of your Christian bookshops, you'll probably find a proliferation of books on the issue of discipleship.

Probably there's not a church represented here this morning, but you have discipleship classes. And we talk about discipling people and discipleship is a big word. It's the N word at the present time, certainly in my country.

But men, we do not know too much about discipleship when we read some of these little books. Jesus gave this world a great commission. And that commission is as valid today as it was 2,000 years ago.

And that commission was to go into all the world and preach the gospel. But part of that commission was to make disciples of all nations. The very same Savior who gave that commission to make disciples, that very Savior gave us some of the demands of discipleship.

And those demands are found in this verse that I want to lay before you today. Verse 23, And he said to them all, none were excluded. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.

Take up his cross and follow me. Here are the demands of the one who told us to go and make disciples. Here are the demands that Jesus lays upon you and me and those we disciple.

The demands of discipleship. I don't know how many of you have read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, The Cost of Discipleship. Now I wouldn't dot all Dietrich Bonhoeffer's T and cross all his T. But he was a man who was prepared to be hung by the Nazis.

Not just for what he believed, but for his opposition to them. And his book, The Cost of Discipleship has an introductory chapter that has deeply moved and stirred my soul. He's dealing in that chapter with the issues of cheap grace.

And there's a lot of it in America. And there's a lot of it in my country. Grace, my friend, is not on a bargain counter at a knock-down price today.

God in the 20th century, and in spite of what the American church says, has not placed grace on a bargain counter at a low cost. Grace is on a counter today, but it's as high a cost as ever. And Bonhoeffer is bringing this out in that great book.

Here's what he says. Cheap grace is a deadly enemy of the church. We are fighting for costly grace.

I wonder, are we? Well, that's what Jesus is asking for in this statement that I want to preach on this morning. Salvation without discipleship is cheap grace. Boy, you are big in America at getting decisions.

You can really get them out. I had a particular evangelist from this part of the world come to Ireland, and he pleaded with me to come to this country and join him in his evangelistic effort. I said, brother, I could not stand at a podium when you've come to the end of the meeting and you're singing a hymn and you're going through all the verses of the hymn.

I couldn't stand there and say, now, you come from here, you come from there, you come from yonder, and plead for 20 minutes to get people out to the elder. He said, brother, I would teach you how to do that. I want to be taught how to do that.

I want the spirit of God to do that. I want God to do that. I'm not against doing it.

If you want to do it, do it, brother. It's not my style, it's not my way. And no man can teach me how to do that.

No man can teach me how to bring souls and draw them and force them and coerce them to come. Only the spirit of God can do that. We, I tell you, and I agree with Bonhoeffer in this, and I disagree with him in other things, salvation without discipleship is cheap greed.

We need to see people coming to the altar and coming to the penitent form and coming to the altar call who know the cost of what it's going to mean. You understand what's involved in following Jesus? Jesus says, here are the demands of discipleship. Let me be very simple this morning.

I trust that I'll be fairly easy to follow. The first demand of discipleship that I want to mention, it's the last one that Jesus mentions, but I put it first. The first demand of discipleship is this, there's a savior who must be followed.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Follow me. Modern evangelism has made this out to be something extremely simple.

Come to Christ and you'll be happy. I have had some very sad days since I came to Christ. I've had some very tragic days.

I've known the sorrows that others know. It hasn't rid me of unhappiness sometimes. But here is Jesus saying, the demand of discipleship that I lay down is this, there's a savior who must be followed.

Now let me say a few things about this. If you're going to meet that demand of discipleship in following Jesus, first of all, you must be savingly committed to the person of Jesus Christ. That's where it begins.

You must be savingly committed to the person of Jesus Christ. And what do I mean by that? I mean simply this, that you've got to be genuinely, definitely, positively, with no risks about it, be born again of the Spirit of God. And that isn't just walking beside us to real.

That isn't just raising your hand. That isn't just raising and nodding at the preacher that you're coming. That's the life of God coming into a man's soul when he's savingly, savingly committed to the person of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, in your preaching, get back to this. We have too many phonies in our churches, too many phonies in our prophets who've never been down the road of being savingly committed to the person of Jesus Christ. They know nothing of being regenerated.

They've given some kind of mental ascent. They can go to a seminary, they can get a theological degree and it makes them a preacher. No, no, it needs more than that.

We need to be savingly committed to the person of Jesus Christ. The life of God needs to come into a man's soul. He needs the very nature of God to possess him.

That's what the new birth is about. And if you haven't been savingly committed to the person of Christ, then get back to Calvary this morning. That's why I do not agree with this business of sinning and repenting and sinning and repenting and sinning and repenting.

John says, you cannot sin for His seed is in you. The life of God is in you and it rebels against sin. Don't be going to have this mark of discipleship then I tell you, friend, we've got to be savingly committed to the person of Christ.

Listen to what Stephen Charnock, the Puritan said. Charnock says this, regeneration is the universal change of the whole man. It is as large in renewing as sin was in defacing.

It's the universal change of a whole man. Friend, I believe the new birth is radical. Isn't birth radical? I tell you, birth is radical.

Even a lady coming to give birth to a child is a radical thing. That child is transformed from one state to another. It's life coming forward.

There's something powerful about birth. Nine months that child is being conceived in the mother's womb. It's going through that process of conception and then there comes that moment of life and there's birth.

What a dynamic thing it is. That's what we need. Brother, go for nothing less in your church.

Don't be leading people into false professions. Don't be working on their emotions to try and get statistics. Make sure God is moved upon them and they're savingly committed to Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1.4, whereby are given unto us the exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be the partakers of the divine nature. A.J. Gordon, the great preacher of Boston said this. Regeneration is the communication of the divine nature to man by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word.

Oh, we need to be savingly committed to the person of Christ if we're going to follow him. That's why a lot of people don't keep following. That's why a lot of people fall back.

God saved me when I was a lad in my teens and I tell you, friend, I've never had the least desire to go back. The road has been tough, it has been hard, but I tell you, I've never once wanted to go back. I've nothing to go back to, nor I have no desire to go back to those things.

I don't say that this morning with any sense of glory or any sense of great ambition that I have. I say that because God saved me. He put me through months of real hellish conviction.

I felt lost. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat. I could do nothing.

I was under such despair of soul until God came and he came and dwelt within my life, savingly committed to the person of Jesus Christ. But if we're going to follow this Savior, this Savior that needs to be followed as part of the demands of discipleship, we not only need to be savingly committed to the person of Christ, we need to be preeminently committed to the person of Christ. He must be first, folks.

He can't be second. I remember listening to dear old Martin Lloyd-Jones one night preaching on this. And he says there can be no second person.

He must be first. First. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

We must be preeminently committed to the person of Jesus Christ. Is something else taking the place of Jesus in your life? Is he second? Maybe he's third? We must be preeminently committed to the person of Jesus Christ. There's a lovely story I like to tell.

I don't know if the name of Dr. Graham Scroggie is familiar to any of you. He was a great British preacher. He preached at Ketwick one year and a young lady came to see him after one of the meetings.

And she said to Dr. Scroggie, Dear old Dr. Scroggie, I would love to be preeminently committed to Jesus Christ, but there's one thing in my life that I'm just not willing to give up in order that I may be preeminently committed to Jesus Christ. Dear old Dr. Scroggie took down his Bible and he turned to that lovely story of Peter when he was in the rooftop. And there he was and this sheet came down full of all kinds of meat.

Do you remember the story? And the voice said, Arise, Peter, kill and eat. And Peter says, Not so, Lord. And dear old Scroggie took his Bible and he said to that young girl, my dear, and he said, If you're going to say not so, you can't say Lord.

And if you're going to say Lord, you can't say not so. That dear lady went away from Scroggie that day after that morning service and she wandered in the hills around beautiful Ketwick in the north of England. And she got back to see Dr. Scroggie at night and she said, Dr. Scroggie, I wouldn't say Lord and I'll never say not so.

And men, you cannot say Lord and say not so at the same time. If you're going to say Lord, you can't say not so. And if you're going to say not so, you can't say Lord.

And we must be preeminently committed to the person of Jesus Christ. He must be first in your home, in your ministry, in your study, in your heart, in your ambition, in everything. He must be first.

If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for Him, said C.T. Starr. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to give what he cannot lose, said Jim Elliott when a student at Wheaton College. We must be preeminently committed to the person of Jesus Christ.

Men, are you through with God today on this issue? Is He first? Many of you have been coming to talk to me during this conference and I appreciate it and I hope what I've shared has been a blessing. But I say this to you again. I never got anywhere by talking to men.

I got somewhere when I talked to God. I walked through island conventions. I stood at the front.

I fell in my feet and I cried to God and often I was only making an exhibition of myself. I never got anywhere until I shut myself away and alone with God in a private place with no witness there, only God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And I got through with God there.

And that's how I still feel. I don't mind people praying with me. I pray with people in my church.

But I tell you sometimes when I come to meetings like this, I just like to get alone and get it out with God and ask God what He wants me to do. Brother Harold has been offering to pray with me and I've refused a few times. It's not because I don't like you praying with me, brother.

It's just I feel I want to be there with God and get God to speak to my heart. It's hard to let God speak to you when there's somebody else with you. The third thing I want you to notice is this in this matter of following Jesus.

We mustn't only be savingly committed to His person and preeminently committed to His person. We must be honorably committed to the person of Jesus Christ if we're going to follow Him. Friend, there must be no hokery pokery.

You know what that means? Maybe that's a British expression. Nothing under the counter. Sometimes the shop window looks good, but it's what's under the counter that's the problem.

I remember reading, not reading, hearing a dear brother who was a missionary in Congo and had seen the revival in Congo. And he said he described the church in Congo like this. He says the shop window was beautiful, but it was what was under the counter was the problem.

I wonder are we honorably committed to Jesus Christ today? Friend, is your life an honorable testimony to Christ? I'm not asking you to rake up sin that God has forgiven and that God has put away and purged in His blood and forgiven and forgotten. And if God forgets it, you ought not to be raking it up. But I'm asking you, are you living honorably now? Because we've got to be honorably committed to Jesus Christ.

There are too many scandals in the church. The cause of Christ has suffered desperately because God's people in terms of discipleship are not following Jesus Christ honorably, honorably. Let me tell you another story.

This name will probably not mean a thing to you. How many have ever heard of a man called Frank Crossley? Not one of you, no. So I can tell the story knowing you've never heard it before.

Frank Crossley was a very wonderful businessman. He was the inventor of the Crossley engine. And he made engines, gas engines, that would drive little factories.

Two young brothers in the city of London decided to start up a little business. They were short on cash. And they bought one of the small Crossley engines to drive their works.

And after one year of working with that little engine, they were facing bankruptcy. They were Christians, a couple of Christian brothers that were Methodists. And after the year of working and facing bankruptcy, they felt it would be a great dishonor for their little company to go into liquidation.

So one of them decided that they would go to Manchester and see Frank Crossley and tell him the dilemma they were in. And they went to Manchester. He saw Frank Crossley.

And Frank Crossley sat across the desk from this young London businessman. And he said, tell me your problem. And he told the problem.

He said, sir, there was nothing wrong with your engine. We just chose the wrong one. But he said, we're facing bankruptcy.

Frank Crossley was a godly man, a saintly man. And he looked at that young man and he said, I want you to do something. I want you to go back to London.

Get your brother to make up the books. Come back to me and tell me how much you've lost. And bring me back the engine.

And I will make up what you've lost. And I will give you a bigger engine. And it won't cost you anything.

And that young man left that office that day in Manchester. He walked to the railway station to catch a train back to London. In those days in Britain they had an old waiting room and a fire burning in the hearth.

And that young man was in the waiting room alone waiting for the train. He was so overwhelmed by what Frank Crossley said he went over to the fireplace and he put his arm up. And he was weeping and he was crying.

And as he was crying the door of the waiting room opened and in came a man by the name of Thomas Cook. He was a Methodist evangelist. He too was traveling in the train.

The young man knew him because he preached in his church but Thomas Cook did not know the young man. And he went over to the young man as Thomas Cook would have done. And he said, young man, can I share your grief? Can I share your sorrow? And that young businessman turned to Thomas Cook and he said, Thomas, Mr. Cook, I haven't had any sorrow today.

I haven't had any grief today. I've just met a man today who treated me like Jesus would have treated me. That's what I mean by being honorable.

Friend, we need to be honorably committed to Jesus Christ. I was in South Africa a little while ago preaching. I was sent to stay in a home in Cape Town.

Beautiful home. That's one of the blessings of being a preacher. Sometimes you stay in far nicer homes than you live in yourself.

I was driven around. I never traveled and saw many Mercedes cars in my life. But I was put to this home.

Beautiful home. Swimming pool out at the back and all the luxury that you folks know about that we don't know about. That young man in that home employed 700 people in the city of Cape Town.

I moved to Durban to preach at the Durban Keswick Convention. When I was preaching at the Durban Keswick Convention, this lady came up to me. She said to me, where did you stay in Cape Town? I said, I stayed with John.

Oh, she said, I used to work for John. I was his personal secretary. She said, John will show up.

A man employing 700 people. That was the testimony of the lady who'd worked close with him and did all his secretarial work. He was so honest.

Are we honorably committed to Jesus Christ? That very same evangelist that I've mentioned, Thomas Cook, was coming for a series of meetings to a particular place in England. He was to stay with a gentleman in the area who had a lady, a maid as we call them, to look after things and do the cooking and prepare things. One morning that maid went down to the butcher's to get some meat.

She was rather cynical. She said, there's a preacher coming to stay in the house. She said, the preparation that's being made for him, you would think it was Jesus himself when he's coming.

Thomas Cook came and he preached. Stayed in that home. And after the meetings were over and he'd gone, the lady went down to the butcher's again.

And the butcher said, well, how did you get on? She said, Jesus has come and gone. She was like Jesus. Man, are we honorably committed to the person of Jesus Christ? And then the fourth thing is this.

If we're going to follow Jesus as a term of discipleship or a demand of discipleship, we mustn't only be savingly committed and preeminently committed and honorably committed. We must be obediently committed. We must be obediently committed.

You know, obedience is not just an Old Testament principle. It's a New Testament principle as well. There are some people today who feel that obedience is only for the Old Testament time.

You don't obey the judgment of God or Paul. Man, obedience is New Testament. And I'll say this, it's more than New Testament.

It's 20th century too, in terms of Christianity. We must be obediently committed to Jesus Christ. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

But he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. He's doing God's will. We must be obediently committed to the person of Jesus Christ.

Why call you me, Lord, Lord, and you do not the things that I say? Boy, that searches my heart. You know, I've preached there for 30 years and I've never preached in those chants because they frighten me. Lord, Lord.

Lord, Lord. And yet you do not the things that I say. During the Prussian siege of Paris, there was a young gunner called Peter Barras.

He was standing by his gun one day. And his commanding officer came over to him and he said to him, Do you see that little shanty out there in the thicket? That little shanty is full of Prussians and I want you to fire on it. That young soldier charged his gun and he fired.

And in a matter of moments, that little shanty was totally obliterated. His commanding officer turned to congratulate him on a good shot. And he noticed his face was pale and there was a tear forming in his eye.

He said, Gunner, what's wrong? He said, Sir, that little shanty was not infested with Prussians. That little shanty was my home. And everything I had in the world was in it, but I have obeyed you.

Would you be willing to give up your home to obey not an army commanding officer, but a great commander of our faith, your Lordship? Are you prepared for total obedience? Are you? If we're going to follow Christ in terms of discipleship, we must be following him obediently. The great Dr. D.H. Jowett, who ministered for some time, I think it was in New York. The great Westminster Chapel, London, where Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones ministered up until his death, or close to his death anyhow, was vacant.

Can you imagine this happening today? That center city church in London, that great bastion of preaching in London, vacant. The King of England writing to D.H. Jowett in New York and saying, Sir, please consider coming to Westminster Chapel. London needs a preacher like you.

He was a British man, but he'd come to preach at a Presbyterian church, I think it was, in New York. Can you imagine President Clinton writing to someone in England and saying, we have got a church vacant in Washington, D.C., and it needs a preacher like you? That's what happened in those days. D.H. Jowett

came to London, and he had a powerful minister at Westminster Chapel, London.

But he tells the story of attending a commissioning service in London for new officers from the Salvation Army College. General Booth was still alive at the time, and Booth invited him to come and be at this commissioning service for Salvation Army officers. Now, I understand the same principle still prevails in Salvation Army circles today.

Every one of those young officers who'd gone through their training school came and stood before the general to receive their commission. Not one of them knew where they were going. They hadn't been told.

They had no choice in the matter. Some were being sent to France, some were being sent to other countries in the world. But Jowett says the thing that impressed him most was this, that every one of them took their commission with a salute.

We obey. We're ready. That's the first principle.

That's the first demand of discipleship that Jesus lays down, that a Savior who must be followed. Secondly, that a self that must be denied. I feel like sitting down at this point, because this is where I have the biggest problem in my own life.

But Jesus says, if you're going to be my disciple, there's not only a Savior who needs to be followed, but there's a self that needs to be denied. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and follow me. Now, I've preached at conventions for the higher life.

And I've preached at conventions for the victorious life. And I've preached at conventions for the deeper life. But I've never yet been asked to preach at a convention for the lower life.

Never. But Jesus says, if any man will come after me, he's got to deny himself. Let me say a little word about the difficulty of such a denial.

Brothers, today, I want to tell you, this is difficult. This is difficult. Boy, is it difficult to deny self.

I said to you the other night, that the person who has given me the greatest problem in my ministry has been myself. Myself. And here is the difficulty of this denial, denying self.

F.B. Meyer once said, the self-life that our greatest struggle is the ego-business, which spoils the music of our lives. And the hymn writer put it like this, oh, how hard it was to die. And all self to crucify.

Let me lose myself and find it, Lord it be. Now, there are many people running about always wanting to be crucified, but never being crucified. We've got to die daily.

Die daily. Packer says concerning mortification, mortification is war. War.

It was Oswald Chambers who said that the hardest funeral he ever had to attend was his own, and it was a white one. Have you attended your own funeral yet? I referred to George Mueller the other night who attended his. There was a day when I died, he said, I had already died to George Mueller.

But it's a difficult thing. F.J. Hugo, in his book, *The Cross of Christ*, he tells of the fruitlessness of his missionary work in Mexico. And he says this, I found that my own carnality and selfishness had given ground to monsters of hell.

I myself invite you then. I must get rid of self. That was as clear as the noonday sun.

You've got to deny self now. Deny self. When God's asking you to get out of your bed in the morning to pray, that's an area in which you've got to deny self.

The bed's lovely and cosy and comfortable. A blanket to sleep tonight. But we've got to get out of that.

We have a very godly man coming, getting on in years now in Britain. He's the pastor of Heath Church in Cardiff. A man by the name of Vernon Hines.

A man with a great heart for revival. I've heard him preach the revival. He tells a story, at least I heard him tell the story, of one of his missionaries who's been on the mission for five years.

And she's come home infertile. And he said to her when she came home after being away for five years, he said to her, Do you see any difference about it? Yes, she says, I do. What's the difference? You deny yourself nothing.

The first person that I led to Christ and my previous pastor was a young woman. I remember the evening she came from the balcony of the church to seek God. She's a missionary today in Taiwan.

She's been there for many years. She told me about a young man to apply to the mission that she's working with for missionary service in Taiwan. He laid down this stipulation.

He said, I will become a missionary in Taiwan so long as I can live in a house with a swimming pool. And drive a car the same as I'm driving in the United States of America. And that is not denying self.

You've got a swimming pool. The Lord bless you. I haven't got one.

It would be nice to have one. You drive a large, luxurious car. The Lord bless you.

But a missionary cannot lay down those stipulations. No servant of Christ can lay down those stipulations. You've got to deny self.

And I tell you, it's a difficult thing. And I'm not minimizing it. I know the difficulty of denying self.

But let me say secondly, there's not only the difficulty of it. Friend, there's the possibility of it. You see, Jesus wouldn't have said this if it wasn't possible.

Jesus never would have said, deny self, if that was beyond your capability and mine. And it is beyond your capability and mine. Only God can help us to deny self.

But there's a possibility of it. Thank God there is. There was a day when I died, says Mueller.

It happened to me. I think I mentioned in one of the other meetings of a young pastor in Saskatoon, coming down the aisle one night in one of those revival meetings, falling on the altar and crying out and saying, God, I want to die, but you take over. That's the spirit.

It was Bonhoeffer who said, when God calls a man, he bids him come and die. When God calls a man, he bids him come and die. And that's not just for missionaries.

That's just not for pastors. That's not just for revivalists or evangelists. That's for everybody.

He said to them all, if any man will come after me. I know it's probably specifically speaking about the disciples, but I believe we're all disciples. If any man will come after me.

You know, I'm often challenged by the thing that Dr. Tudor said about a man on a cross. You ever read it? Tudor says there are three things that mark a man on the cross. Number one, he's facing in one direction.

Number two, there's no going back. And number three, there's no further plans of his own. That's a man on a cross.

A man on a cross. Lord, bend this proud and stiff neck I. Help me to bow my head and die. Beholding him in Calvary, he bows his head for me.

Oh, the possibility of it. You know, there's a desirability of it. There's nothing in this world so beautiful as a life that has died out to self.

I'm not standing before you this morning and saying that I'm there yet. Oh brother, I've still a lot to go. But I've met one or two dear souls that have burned out to self and died out to self.

And whose lives are such a benediction and such a blessing. You see, when a man is through with God, there's no exhibitionism about it. He doesn't parade himself.

Self is not the thing that you notice most. He doesn't talk about himself. Sometimes we preachers talk too much about ourselves.

I'm guilty of that. When a man's through with God, the desirability of such a denial is such that it makes him beautiful. Makes him lovely.

I was in a bookshop just since coming here. And I tell you, I was astounded to see some of the books that were on the shelf. On self-assertivism.

And how to assert yourself. And how to promote yourself. When I was traveling on the plane here, I was reading the in-flight magazine.

And there was an ad for books. And they had a picture and it was bookstocked this height. And they were all about how to make yourself a better man.

How to promote yourself. How to advance yourself. The world is crying out to us today.

You walk into the average bookshop and that's it. I don't know what it's like in this country. But back in our country with the feminist movement, women are going to classes.

How to assert themselves. How to take their position. How to stand up for themselves.

You know why the world is teaching us that? Heaven's saying to us, die. Crucify yourself. And unfortunately, he has come within the church.

Our dear brother just spoke earlier. Thank you for your word, brethren, for looking at me. He talked about someone taking the church to court.

That's happening in our country. I never ever thought I'd see the day when a church member would read the church of Jesus Christ through a civil court. And the word of God begin it.

Never thought I'd see the day when a member of a church would take that church to court. And I think it's worse in your country than what I hear. You see, we need to deny self.

And it's not only the difficulty of it, it's the possibility of it, the friend, the desirability of it. It's a beautiful thing when we get through with God. Hugel in that book that I mentioned earlier, the cross of Christ, he says, Until Christ works out in you an inner crucifixion, which will cut you off from self-infatuation and unite you with God in a deep union of love, a thousand heavens could not give you peace.

If you want to know how to die to self, don't come and talk to Tom Shaw or Harold Vaughn or any of these brothers. You get away with God. Get alone with God.

Say, Lord, it's all up to me unless you help me to die out to myself. And don't leave there until you're out with God. Don't leave until you know you've settled it.

Until you see that God and Jesus Christ is the most precious commodity of your life. Let me lose myself and find it, Lord, indeed. May all self be slain, my friends.

She learned this lovely hymn back at the church that she attended at the finishing school. The hymn that she sang was this hymn, Jesus, I, my cross, have taken all to leave and follow thee. Death to truth, despise for sin, trials and hence.

My all should perish, every fond admission. All I've sought and hoped to know. She went on to sing that hymn.

And play the piano. She had a little suitcase with her to walk through the door. And leave that home and go out into that world, not knowing where the future led.

And as she was doing that, her dad stepped into that room. The tears were running down his eyes. He'd heard her sing.

He came up to her and he said, darling, if Jesus means that much to you, will you tell me about it? She led her dad to Christ. That's the meaning of the cross, friends. For he prepared to go that length of need be.

For the sake of Jesus. But what about the marks of the cross? The meaning of the cross? Something to bear because you're identified with Christ. What about the marks of the cross? Paul says, I bear on my body the mark.

Brethren, this afternoon of this day, do you have any marks of the cross in your life? Do you have any battle wounds? Do you have any scars? I tell you this, I lived for many years as a Christian and I had no battle wounds. I didn't know anything about the marks of the cross. Everything was plain sailing.

Every church I pastored seemed just to go like that. Every church I pastored I had accommodation problems, finding room for people. God was so good to me.

God had given me a lovely wife. He had given me everything I wanted. Family.

Many years ago I began to know what it was to bear the marks of the cross in my life. I have a few scars today. It wasn't because of sin.

It wasn't because of immorality. It was because of a cross that I was prepared to carry. The marks of the cross.

John Flavel the Puritan said, no man has a velvet cross. You've been remarked. Is there anything to prove that you've been in the battle? Anything to prove, friend, that you've been right there? I told you this story, at least I think I told the men in the pastor's conference the other day.

The story I heard Tony Campola tell. He told of bringing a dear old missionary, an old veteran missionary to speak to a bunch of students at the college where he teaches. An old lady sneaked into the meeting somehow or other.

The old speaker wasn't very fluent. He burned himself out for God and Vietnam. The mission.

He wasn't eloquent. When he finished the young freshman turned and said to another one, he didn't have much to say. The old lady turned to him and said, young man, when a man kneels to a cross he doesn't have to say anything.

Then he remarks to the cross about it. May I be willing, Lord, to bear daily my cross for thee. Even thy cup of grief to share.

That and all for me. Forgive all these illustrations but they're coming to my mind as I speak. Within a three week period in my congregation we had three brothers, three Chinese brothers come to our church.

One is a dear brother called George Shien. He spent 18 years in a prison camp in China. Do you know the job he was given? He was put down into the old cesspit where all the human excrement went from that camp.

He stood every day up to his waist in that excrement, shoveling it out into an old trough. He did that for 18 years. He said the stench of the infection was so terrible that very few other men ever lived to come out of that situation.

But God preserved him in it for 18 years. He said the thing that became most precious to him standing in that old stenchy cesspit full of human excrement. With that beautiful loving old head I come to the garden alone while the dew is still in the rose.

I'll never forget it. And he broke our congregation. He came forward to the desk that evening and he sang it.

Beautiful voice. The joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known. He is the master of the cross.

He knows what it is to bear the marks of the cross. For three weeks later we had another Chinese brother came by the name of Harry Lee. He's now living in your country.

His story is an amazing story. If ever you can find the book, it's published by OMS International. It's called From the Jaws of the Dragon.

It's a beautiful story. A lovely love story in it too about the relationship he had before he was in prison. His fiancée agreed to keep faith with him while he was in prison.

And then he was leaked out to be jailed in prison. She went off and got married. And by and by as a result of the death of her husband, he and Harry met up again so unexpectedly and they're married today.

But for 11 years he was in the prison. That man spoke with such proof in him. He too was a lovely singer.

And I'm amazed and interested that for many of these people in prison situations in these countries, him seemed to be extremely precious to them. He said the hymn that was most precious to him during those days was that lovely hymn, All the way my Saviour leads me, what have I to ask besides? Who can doubt his tender mercy, who through life has been my guide? He too sang it for us that evening. Do you know any of the remarks of the cross? I'm not saying to you today, friend, that you've got to go out and find the situation where you're tortured.

No, no. I'm just asking you to take up the cross and follow Jesus. Don't shirk it.

Don't skirt around it. And I know some of you have hard burdens to bear. I know some of you men, you're frustrated, they're breaking your heart.

And there are people that are causing you problems. And you feel like giving up in despair. If you're in God's work and that's part of the cross, take it up.

Take it up. Jesus told us to do it. And I tell you, he'll honour you for it.

And that leads me to my last point. Not only the meaning of the cross and the marks of the cross, but what about the merits of the cross? Is there any merit in cross-bearing? I tell you there is, sir. There's merit in cross-bearing.

I told you in my early days here, I'm currently president of the faith mission in Britain. It's an honorary position. I don't work with the mission.

I'm a pastor, but I'm the honorary president. I share their council meetings. I often say I'm just the person that allows them to put my name at the head of the notepaper.

But that's part of my job. But they have a little badge, a little crest. And that badge consists of a crown and a cross.

A cross and a crown. And the meaning of it is simply this, that there will be no crown without a cross. You know, there is merit in cross-bearing.

Paul says, I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I kept the faith. Listen, he knew what it was to bear a cross. And Paul said, it's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous judge, will give me in that day.

And there is merit in cross-bearing. If I could draw the curtain of heaven aside this morning, or this afternoon, and speak to John and Betty's staff, who are 28 and 27, I think, had their heads chopped off in China. And their little daughter, Helen Priscilla, shot away in a house, alone.

If I could speak to them this morning and say, was it worth it to go to China, to be taken away from your only little daughter, three months old, out into the hillside of China, to be headed for the sake of the gospel, was it worth it? Was it worth it bearing the cross to that extent? I believe John and Betty's staff would say, yeah, it was worth it every bit. If I could speak to Jim Elliot this morning, and those other lads

that laid down their lives in that little strip, seeking to bring the gospel to the upper Indians, and say to Jim Elliot, those great words that I've said before, he's no fool, he gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose. And if I could say, Jim, you see the fool, oh no, oh no.

There was merit in bearing the cross to that extent. There was merit in bearing the cross to that extent. If we could speak this morning to those dear brothers who've recently laid down their lives in Columbia, Steve Wallace, Tim Van Dyke, say, was it worth it? Yes, it was worth it all.

Many years ago in Scotland, during those killing days, as they're called, two women, two women were tied to the stake in the Solway Firm. One was 70 years of age. Her name was Margaret McLoughlin.

They're known as the two Margarets. The other was about 17 or 18. Her name was Margaret Wilson.

A large stake was driven into the ground in the Solway Firm. One was driven in a little further out than the other. The old lady was tied to that stake.

Another stake was driven in a little further near the coast. The young woman was tied to that stake. They loved their savior.

They were dying for the crown rights of their Redeemer. The tide began to come in. Came to dear old Margaret McLoughlin of 70 years.

The water started to rise around her and she was choking and beginning to drown. Those brittle Dragoon guards that were putting them to death said to young Margaret of 18 years of age, What do you see out there? She says, I see Christ wrestling out there. I see Christ wrestling out there.

In a few moments old Margaret McLoughlin of 70 summers was with her savior. The tide came in. Came to young Margaret.

Being a Scottish Presbyterian, began to sing the words of the 24th Psalm in the metrical version. My sins and faults through you through thou do Lord forgive. She went through the psalm singing.

She so agitated those guards that they caught her by the neck and they put her head under the icy water of the Solway. She too was with God. We could speak to those two dear ladies this morning.

Say, was it worth it bearing the cross to that extent? Both of them would say, I'd go that way again. And the thing that bothers me is this. One day I get home to glory.

If there's such a thing as being ashamed in heaven, that's how I feel about it. It may not be. But when I stand beside Jim Elliot, John and Betty Sam and a host of others and they have a martyr's crowd.

I feel ashamed that I didn't take up the cross much more. Follow my Savior. All the way.

Take up the cross and follow me. I hear my blessed Savior call. Why should I make a lesser sacrifice? And Jesus.

Give his all. Taking up the cross for Jesus, glad for him to suffer shame. All my gain I count but losses for the glory of that name.

Tell me not of heavy crosses nor of burdens hard to bear. For I found this great salvation makes each burden light appear. And I love to follow Jesus.

Gladly counting all but dross. Worldly honors all forsaken. For the glory of that cross.

I don't know how many of you have ever read any of the writings of Amy Carmichael. But in her book, Goulthard. Amy Carmichael has this lovely poem.

She's a British girl. Came from Northern Ireland where I come from. Gave her life to serve God in India.

Gave her life to serve God in India. And in that book, Goulthard, she writes these words. Hast thou no scar? No hidden scar on foot or side or hand? I hear thee sung as mighty in the land.

I hear them heal thy bright ascendant star. Hast thou no scar? Hast thou no wound? Yet I was wounded by the archer spent. Lean me against a tree to die and rent.

By ravening beasts that compass me I swooned. Hast thou no wound? No wound, no scar. Yet as the master shall thy servant be.

And pierced are the feet that follow me. But thine are whole. Can he have followed far? Who has no wound? No scar.

If any man will come after me. Let him deny himself. Dig up his cross.

And follow me. The Saviour that must be followed. Self that must be denied.

And the service that must be performed. Man, let's go that way. If that's the way God would lead us.

And I believe it is. And do it for his name's sake and for his glory. And not for our sake.

Amen.

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