

The cost of discipleship: self-denial, v.34

- I. The choice to follow Christ is not a “both...and” but an “either...or” choice: *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself.*
 - A. Following Christ therefore demands or comes at the cost of a man's *self*.
 - B. To follow Christ is to turn away from and deny self while to cater to self is to turn away from and deny Christ.
- II. This denial of one's self is best illustrated by *taking up the cross* because to deny oneself is to be *dead* to self's desires, *dead* to self's love, and *dead* to self's claim.
- III. Thus to deny self is: *to live perpetually, purposely, and practically under the dominion and shadow of the cross of Christ by which our sins were paid for and by which our very discipleship to Christ was eternally secured.*
 - A. There's no such thing as a Christian who doesn't bear the cross of self-denial.

Self-denial defined

- I. Walter Chantry: *Bearing a cross is every Christian's daily, conscious selection of those options which will please Christ, pain self, and aim at putting self to death.*
- II. JC Ryle: *Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory.*
- III. David Clarkson: *The cross is the ordinary lot of Christians... it is so inseparable from a Christian that he seems to be nailed to it... and therefore it cannot be avoided without sinning against Christ.*
- IV. The Lord Jesus Christ:
 - A. The demand is *universal*, v.34.
 - B. The demand is *perpetual*, Lk 9.23. Walter Chantry: *The only depository for the Christian's cross is the cemetery.*
 - C. The demand is *mortal*, v.35.

Self-denial illustrated

- I. Self-denial means denying our sinful thinking, 1Cor 2.14.

- II. Self-denial means denying our own will, Rom 6.19.
- III. Self-denial means denying our sinful desires, 1Pet 2.11; Ps 73.25-26.
- IV. Self-denial means denying our own honor, Rom 11.36.
- V. Self-denial means denying our desire for possessions, 1Tim 6.8-10, 17.
- VI. Self-denial means denying our friends and nearest relations, Mt 10.37; Lk 14.26.
- VII. Self-denial means denying any claim to life, Lk 14.26.

The only way to save our life is to lose it, v.35

- I. Whoever loses his life for Christ's sake will eternally save it.
- II. Whoever saves his life for his own sake will eternally lose it.

The gain promised upon self-denial, v.35

- I. *Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it, v.35.*
 - A. Mk 10.29-30, *Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, and in the age to come eternal life..*
 - B. Discipleship to the Lord is two-sided. We suffer, we lose, we hurt, we go without, but the gain is incomparably great, 2Cor 4.17-18.
- II. If self-denial is only contrasted with earthly pleasures lost, it seems hard and threatening. But when self-denial is weighed in the balance with the glorious treasures to be had through it, then we see what a glorious friend it really is.
 - A. Samuel Rutherford understood this: *Christ's cross is the sweetest burden that I ever bore.*
 - B. Themistocles understood this: *I had been undone unless the cross had undone me.*
 - C. And Paul apostle understood this, 2Cor 4.17; Rom 8.18, 28.
 - D. Do you understand this? Do you know the blessed fruits of self-denial?
 - E. Are you living a life of self-denial for Christ's sake? Or are you holding back things from Christ for yourself?