

Death to Self

He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it (Matthew 10:38-39).

One of the requirements, which is also an opportunity, is that we get to die to our old natures. Since the fall, everyone's life is filled with pain, trouble, and agony. One of the wisest men who ever lived described our lives as empty, vain, and pointless (Ecclesiastes 1:2; 1:14; 2:23; 4:3; etc . . .). Most of what mankind calls fun is an attempt to cover over and ignore this emptiness. Revelers party and drink in order to "kill time." Couch potatoes soak up spectator sports in the hope that somebody else's life might be more exciting than their dull existence. Gossips sit and discuss other people's lives because they do not want to face the pain and agony in their own.

When Adam chose, as a representation of our own decision making, to disobey God, Adam decided to make mankind's character one which aligns with evil and not with God's nature and blessings. Some have said, "What was the big deal? He only ate from one little tree. He did not hurt anybody . . ." But God created that tree! God owned it! He had the right to say who could eat from it and when. Adam and Eve's eating from God's tree was theft!

God had created Adam and Eve. He had every right to tell them what they could, and could not, do. For Adam and Eve to do as they pleased was again theft and abuse of what God had created, in this case, themselves. Every one of us has made that same decision. Each of us has chosen to place our own desires above following our Creator. Adam was chosen as our first representative so that we could see the consequences of our own decisions and the miserable life that results dramatically illustrated.

In Christ, we can do away with that pathetic existence and embrace fulness of life. Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly (John 10:10)." But in order to get to the abundant life, we must pass through death. If we are content with our pathetic existence, we will never embrace the life God has for us. Peter says concerning our old and new

way of life, “live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles (1 Peter 4:2-3).” We have already had more than enough time to determine that our old life is worthless compared to the greatness of the glory which God has waiting for us.

We could rebuild the old nature that acted like Adam, but Galatians 2:18 says that “If I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.” At any particular moment, we are either rebuilding the old or walking in the new. Sin for which we refuse to repent causes us to lose our fellowship with the Father. However, the person who continues to walk in his new nature “cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:9).” Fortunately, when we do sin and quickly repent, we find that God “is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).”

We must be willing to give up our old junk if we desire to receive the new life He offers. Our covenant is an exchange: we give up the emptiness and trash of our old life; we receive all the riches, joy, and glory He offers. The exchange is an all or nothing deal. On the cross, Christ gave His all; He expects nothing less from us. He expects us to surrender all, good and bad.

We have no problem (usually) giving up the things which are bad for us, but often we desire to hold on to some of the “good” things. But it is a package deal. Everything is tied together. We either keep our old life or walk in the new. There is no long term provision for a mix.

While many people are willing to give up the obvious sin in their life, many of these remain unwilling to give up the nature which creates the sin because they want to hold onto what they still consider to be the “good” within their own nature. What they do not realize is that the old nature cannot be modified enough to make it godly; it must die entirely so that a true godly nature can take its place. Those who are in this category will quickly recognize themselves from the fact that they seem to honestly repent of sin over and over, but can never actually overcome the sin. They are willing to surrender the sin but not the sin nature *which creates the sin*.

We must give up everything. God asked Abraham to surrender even his own son, that

which was the best and the most important thing in his life. We are asked to give up our very lives, not because life is a terrible thing, but because anything we are holding back from God causes us to fall short of fulfilling our part of the covenant. Whatever is truly good, after we give it to Him, comes back with multiplied interest. Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).” Whatever was not completely good, will also eventually come back, but transformed.

Whenever we give our all to God, He *always* gives His all to us.