

MEDITATION ON SELF-DENIAL

Luke 9:23

And 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.

This saying, spoken by the Lord Jesus to his disciples, has been greatly misunderstood and failed to be fully appropriated, even by the most faithful of believers.

O LORD, help me to understand, and more importantly, fully appropriate, this saying that has been perfectly preserved in the Book of Life for me.

Denial of self is not merely the act of giving up something that we have, or something that we love. It is not the depriving of ourselves some pleasure or some experience. Upon closer examination of this phrase, “deny himself,” we learn that it actually means we must disown ourselves. We, as believers, must recognize that we, that is ourselves, no longer exist. Jesus Christ does not come into our lives to patch up the “old man” and to make him better. He said that he had no intention of putting new wine into old wineskins.

LORD, I know that my condition is such that I must disown myself even to the point of losing my own identity. All of my personal characteristics, all of my learned responses, all of my upbringing, all of who I am, must die. I must die to my opinions, my preferences, and my tastes. I must die to my habits, my wisdom, and my works. I must die to my emotions. Only a dying and being reborn into the resurrected Christ can effect any change in me. Then, and only then, have I truly denied myself because I now live your life. I am now in you. My own identity is swallowed up in your life of victory.

There is a story about a school in North China which has kept growing so much that some new buildings were needed for expansion. Adjoining the property were some buildings, owned and occupied by a local Chinese family, which perfectly suited the needs of the school. After much bargaining, the school bought the property. However, when the time came for the school to move into the buildings, it was unable to do so. Why? The Chinese family had not moved out. **Purchase gives title, but only vacancy enables possession.**

LORD, my desire is for you to completely possess my life. You have already purchased me but now I give you possession by moving myself out. I know you have the right, Lord, to evict me; but that is not your merciful and loving way. You have waited patiently for me to yield myself to you and I now sing with understanding, “Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord, to Thee.”