

# DYING TO SELF

By Benjamin O. Benjamin

God cannot use a man who has not died to his self-life. Such a person cannot go far in the things of God. Christianity is a call to live the life of Christ and not our own lives. Except we die to the self-life we will be living carnally even when we wear a big evangelical or Pentecostal gown and parade ourselves as Christians.

Today words like self-defence, self-made, self-sufficiency, self-effort, self-dependence, self-actualisation, to mention just a few, are gaining grounds and becoming commonly accepted in everyday language. But God is demanding that those who call on Him depart from iniquity. He that is not born of God cannot die to the self. Remember that death speaks of separation; Adam and Eve died (were separated from God) the moment they ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). In the same way, man in his natural state (i.e. before he is born again) is dead to the things of God. That is the reason he cannot please God. He is still dead in his trespasses and captive of the sin-nature (John 1:29); this sin nature has a law and a lifestyle that goes with it. This is what God begins to deal with after our spirit (inner-man) has been made alive by the last Adam [Jesus Christ] who was made a life giving Spirit. You can liken this to saving a drowning man from the river or sea, and after the rescue operation, you begin to press water out of his body so that he can recover and be restored to full life.

When man fell in the Garden of Eden, he fell with every part of him – spirit, soul and body. His inner-man (spirit) could no longer contact God and eventually another god (satan) made himself available for Adam to contact his soulish realm (will, mind, imagination, emotion and desire) automatically became a lawful captive in depravity (Genesis 6:5). His body also lost the glory of God that covered it and hence became amenable to sickness, physical death (following the spiritual death) and was brought under the dominion of demons, animals and even the environment. In fact, man fell flat and could not express God who created him (please pause and revisit Genesis 1:26-31). Since then, man (fallen man) started expressing the fallen nature/himself instead of God. He began to express death and not life for he rejected the Tree of Life [Jesus Christ].

Beloved, the fact that you are born again is not the end of the matter, but the beginning. Just as the drowning man is 'drunk' with water and needs a pressing or artificial respiration to enable the life within him manifest in the body, we need God to first deal with the root with all that is natural and of the self-life before He can make us vessels of gold fit for use in His house and good for the throne (ruling and reigning with Him). For example, the love of money, in the name of prosperity, personal ambition, opinions and natural affection, wild emotions, appetites of the body, strange desires, the love of life itself, and all that makes a converted man live unto himself, for his own comfort and advancement, have to go to the cross. It is no theoretical death but real crucifixion with Christ.

Now, let's look at what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples (not unbelievers) in Luke 9: 23-24, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny HIMSELF, and take up his cross daily 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.*” Beloved, God has not called us to live “our lives” but His life. So we must die to our SELF-LIFE before His life can flow through us. Note the words, *cross* and, *lose his life*. The cross speaks of the way to lose our self-life. No cross, no crown or throne. We see this in the lives of Joseph, David and our Lord Jesus Christ. Again in 2 Corinthians 4: 8-12, the apostle Paul confirmed the above Scripture that he was dying daily having taken up his cross. Verses 10 and 11 emphasize death in us for Jesus’ sake “that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”

But note that the cross does not refer to a metallic, wooden or painted “cross” sign or object hanging on some people’s neck or adorning some church buildings but the ways and means, denials, affliction, rejection, suffering etc which God brings our way and we willingly accept them so that the ‘self’ and its lusts can be dealt with. Only then will God’s life be released in and through us. See Matthew 25: 1-3 and note that what made the wise virgins wise was that they bought oil in their vessels (i.e. willingly paying the price for the Holy Spirit to permeate and deal with their soulish/self- life). The foolish virgins did not consider this necessary though they had oil in their lamps (our spirits – Proverbs 20:27). However, they were all virgins (types of Christians).

Another Scripture that shows us the mind of God in this area of dying to self is John 12: 23 – 25, “Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone: But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it ....” Let me ask you now – since Christ has died for us, why is He still demanding that we die so as to bring forth much fruit (not just gifts)? It is neither spiritual nor physical death that is required of us but to die to the self/soulish life so that the life of Christ can captivate our soul and body. Remember the transfiguration of Christ and the face of Moses shining when he came down from the mountain.

Dying to self brings us to glory and a place of honour by God (John 12: 23, 26). If we are to be true and worthy servants/slaves of Christ, if we are to see the crucified, resurrected and living Christ manifest in us, we must be determined to overcome; we must willingly submit to the dealings of the Lord so that He can lead us to take our cross daily and die to the self-life – our prestige, ego, desires, plans, our wills and opinions, reputation, self-confidence, natural affection, our own thoughts, our own words and our own lives. There cannot be two Lords on the throne of our life. Jesus has to take over all. Therefore, the way up is down. How? Jesus, seeing the glory that was set before Him, “became obedient unto death even the death of the cross,” -Philippians 2: 5 – 11. So the way to life and God’s glory and exaltation is to die daily to the self-life. Self must die and decrease so that Christ can increase (remember John the Baptist).

Presently most people are begged, “bribed” lured, cajoled or “frightened” to follow Jesus with promises like, no sickness, no poverty but millions of naira and dollars; no lack, no problem, no tiredness, no loss of their precious property, no failure in examinations etc. Beloved, it is a great pain that people get carried away and attracted by all this goody-goody gospel of what they can get from Jesus Christ. In fact, “we present to them a cross; and hand over to them a barren scepter.” We introduce them to the logos and not the rhema. We speak “peace, peace”

“sleep, sleep” when in fact the trumpet is sounding. We give seminars and teach them how to make money, all in the name of “prosperity.” We are busy substituting big tithes, offering and pastoral birthday gifts with godliness and contentment which is great gain. We can go on to expose the abomination that is making the ‘church’ desolate (Matthew 24: 15).

Many have bluntly refused to die to self so they cannot bring forth Christ and bear fruit. They are only satisfied with gifts – speaking in tongues and ‘church’ activities and positions. They forget that God is emphasizing fruit now because the gifts are means to maturity and fruitfulness. Please pause and match 1 Corinthians 13 with Galatians 5: 22 – 26. Because many ‘content’ with spiritual barrenness and living unto themselves, people have come up with two classes of Christians – ‘born again Christians’ and ‘Christians’. \_How can you say you are like Christ [Christian] when you are lording over or leading yourself and living your life while proclaiming Jesus is your Lord and Saviour. It sounds sweet but we forget that the lordship of Christ comes after we are saved and also through a diligent walk in the Spirit and death to self.

The whole land is full of people who say that Jesus is the Saviour and Lord yet fruit (Christ) is not springing forth out of them because they have refused to die to self. Hence, righteousness (Christ) is yet to look down from heaven (Psalm 85: 11) and say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” This is why we have desolation, Babylon, Icabod and the like written on many who parade themselves as Christians today. The abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place now (Matthew 24: 15) and the so-called ‘churches’ have become a gathering of all kinds of birds and a place of confusion (Babylon). This is a trumpet sound to you as an individual and to the sincere people of God to flee to Mount Zion where deliverance, holiness and restoration is going on (Obadiah 17). The way to Mount Zion is through death to self and submission to the Spirit of God Who is restoring and recovering a people, a body of believers. Please read Isaiah 2 & Micah 4: 1-5 as you go on. Now, let us conclude with some of the practicalities of dying to self.

What does it mean to go to the cross to die to the self life?

- When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don’t sting and hurt from the insult or oversight, but your heart is full of joy for being counted worthy to suffer for Christ; that is dying to self.
- When your good is evil spoken of, when your good wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinion ridiculed and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself but instead take it all in patient, loving, silence, that is dying to self.
- When you are content with any food, offering, raiment, climate, society, solitude, interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.
- When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works or itch for commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.
- When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met, and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question God even when your own needs are far greater and you are in desperate circumstances, that is dying to self.

- When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than you, and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion and resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self.

Are you dead yet? In these last days, the Spirit will bring us to the cross, “That I may know Him ... being made conformable to His death.”

Like the Philippian Church, we need to hold fast to the cross. And when others see a crucified people, highly anointed of God, moving in deep revelation, imparting life and bearing much fruit of the Spirit, then there will be a great cry to go forth from the earth ... “Let us go to Zion.” Let us hold the head, exalting Jesus with all that is within us. Let us hold fast the body, we need one another and we need the ministries that God has set in the body for our perfection. Let us hold fast the Word; it is rich and getting richer to us all the time. Let us hold fast the cross, it is the way to glory, and our safeguard against self-exalting spirits. Thus we shall obtain the Kingdom and thus shall we be a credit to the gospel and an example of that which God has created to be consecrated unto Himself. God bless you and please avail yourself of the grace which is sufficient and, willingly begin to carry your cross today and start dying to your self-life.

Are you ready?

Books to help you on this topic:

- Salvation of the Soul by Watchman Nee
- Training to Die by Uncle Bayo
- What is Babylon by Bro John Adejoro-Oluwa

*Other Helpful Materials*

The Plummet – Vol. I, II & III

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