

Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 00] As the Lord should enable me this evening, I would ask your attention to the portion of the Word of God we were reading, the 8th chapter of the Gospel according to Mark and the 34th verse.

Verse 34 of the 8th chapter of the Gospel according to Mark. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

These words are the words of eternal wisdom, the words of the Son of God, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I feel that there would be a ready agreement within this place when I say concerning the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that they are essentially valuable. And not only so, but they are to be highly prized in those who really love the Lord.

Let a man be taught by the Holy Spirit of God something of his great need of salvation, making him know himself as a sinner and the nature of his sinnership, and then being brought to the footstool of mercy to hear and learn of Jesus as that great Saviour of sinners.

[1 : 28] Then, friends, I believe there will also be this added lesson that will be well learnt, and that is that we cannot give too much heed, too careful attention to the words of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I want you to notice also that there was not just simply one class of people that were gathered together on this occasion. It wasn't only the outsiders, if I may use that term, but it was the insiders as well who were gathered together here.

We read he had called the people unto him with his disciples also. Some persons might say, well, of course, certainly the outsiders, those who knew very little about the Lord Jesus Christ and his person and his will and his word, they would need to be taught such things as those which follow after.

But I would have you notice, friends, that it was those who might indeed decide that they had had the opportunity of being with Christ for some little time. They had listened to his words and heard the nature of his teaching, and doubtless in some measure they had profited from the things that he had taught them.

I refer to his own disciples. But nevertheless, the Lord addresses exactly the same word to those who are outside as well as those who are inside.

[2 : 55] Not only to men and women who are ignorant and worldly minded to a tremendous degree, but also to those who at least have made a profession of allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, who had followed him a long time because that was the nature of their discipleship, and yet Christ sees the necessity of addressing the same words to both characters.

Perhaps there may be some persons here who, because of what they have known concerning Christ and his word, they might say that there are some things, if a minister was to read them as a text and endeavor to preach upon them, would be really redundant in their case.

But don't think, my friends, that there is anything that has proceeded from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ that is unworthy and unnecessary of your attention, whatever your position may be.

You see, I have no doubt, and I believe, the word of God truths the truth of this, that amongst these disciples that heard these words of the Lord Jesus Christ was a man like John, who was so favored that at the last supper, he laid his head upon the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was such a man as Peter, who was always foremost in the deliberations of the disciples. When there was a need to be a spokesman or always spokesman, then Peter would certainly fill the office.

[4 : 26] And there were the others as well. Men of equal grace, men subject to the same divine call, men whom the Lord would take and use and bless and magnify his name in coming years, through the labors of these men, there were those characters gathered with others who may have been very ignorant of Christ.

You may say to me, well, in view of such a word as that in the text and that which follows, why was it that Christ saw the necessity of teaching them such things as these?

Well, let us analyze the word for a moment or two. Christ says, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

And much that follows is of the same nature. Shall we just consider it in this light? Was there no need among the disciples that these words should be taught to them?

Let us for one moment, my friends, think of the case of some of those that were with the Lord Jesus Christ, and who did need such teaching as this?

[5 : 38] There is Peter himself. We've already read this evening in that chapter of how Peter, conflicted with Christ, and with his word with regard to his sufferings.

So Christ has to say, to impulsive Peter, Peter who saw not the need of the suffering, and the atonement of Christ for sin, he has to say to Peter, Peter, if you would indeed follow me, if you would come after me, then you must deny yourself, and you must take up your cross, and you must follow me in those ways.

And then when we think of Peter later on, boasting as he did before Christ, when the Lord warned him so emphatically, that the great adversary, the devil, had sought to have him, and sifted him as wheat, and yet he had prayed for him, that his faith failed not.

Peter just couldn't believe, that such a condition of affairs could ever have taken, that he should deny his law, three times in succession, in the face of such a warning as this.

Well, says Peter, it is impossible. Ah, said the Lord Peter, you little know yourself, you little know your character, you little know your nature.

[6 : 55] Peter, you need, as a lesson that I would teach you, whosoever will come after me, even you Peter, if you would come after me, then you must deny yourself, and take up your cross, and you must follow me.

Let us remember this, my friends, that the profession of following the Lord Jesus Christ, does not coincide, with what Christ speaks of here. Here is something, that is essentially practical.

This is not just simply, bearing the name of Christ, but here is, suffering for Christ, denying self for Christ, walking a pathway, that is completely devoted unto Christ, whatever the price may be.

You remember those, you friends, how Christ did one of his parables, to his disciples. He says, there was a certain man, who he, wanted to build a tower, and he started building it, but before he finished, he hadn't got enough money, and enough bricks, and enough mortar, and enough timber, to be able to continue, the building of the tower, and said, the Lord Jesus Christ, if you would follow me, then sit down, and count the cost first.

Remember, it's not a name, but it's an action, it's not just simply a profession, but indeed, it is, a great work, and a great trial of faith, to follow Christ.

[8 : 23] In your presence this evening, according to this word, that we have before us, a very, very practical subject tonight, when the Lord says, to his disciples, as well as the people, whosoever, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Well now, as I consider these words, with you this evening, I do want us just, to ask ourselves the question, what does the Lord Jesus Christ, really mean, when he speaks about, denying ourself?

In these days, of course, my friends, the motive of most people is, just simply to have a good time. As long as you're having a good time, as long as you're happy, and so on, that seems to be, the be all, and the end all of life.

I think that some of you, have found this strength, that happiness, isn't something, that you can just simply, lay your hand upon, and possess yourself, of at your own will. I believe, that true happiness, is a real gift, of God, and of his grace.

And I am persuaded, of this, from my own experience, as well, as from the revelation, of the word of God, that true happiness, can never be attained, outside of Jesus Christ.

[9 : 43] And I believe, that very often, the people of God, have found, that real happiness, has been known, within their person, when they have been, enabled, by God's grace, to deny themselves, and take up, their cross, and follow, the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Well now, just a word or two, about this nature, this matter, of denying oneself. You see, it would seem to me, that in this, previous, the previous verses, that just, precede, the word of our text, the Lord Jesus Christ, perceives, rightly so, in all his wisdom, that Peter, is just simply, walking according, to his own wisdom.

He takes, the Lord Jesus Christ, we read, and he rebukes him. Rebukes him, of a mock ground. Well doubtless, my friends, if you rebuke, another person, for certain things, you say, well I have, a greater knowledge, than you do.

I realize, that what you are doing, is wrong. And you set yourself up, as a kind of authority, when you rebuke, somebody else. You may rebuke them, of course, upon the authority, of another.

It's a good thing, if you can do that, and not upon your own authority. But certainly, it wasn't upon, the authority of another, that Peter rebuked Christ. It was upon, his own authority, because he thought, that he possessed, all the wisdom, that he needed, with regard to this matter.

[11 : 11] As I have suggested, on more than one occasion, Peter reads it like this, surely, thou being God, and I have already said, that I believe, that thou art the Messiah, the promised one of God, the Son of God, I've already confessed thee, as such, and if thou art, the Son of God, from everlasting, then, what need is there, that you should have, to suffer these things, that you've been talking about.

And so, there is a conflict of knowledge, and a conflict of wisdom. Christ has spoken out, of the wisdom, of his person, of his spirit, of his knowledge, of all things, and Peter comes along, and says, Lord, it needn't be.

This cannot be wisdom. I judge it, according to my own wisdom. Consequently, friends, I think we can take, the first step, and say this, there is the necessity, of the denying, of our own wisdom, in order that the wisdom, that is of God, may be exalted, in us, and by us.

I don't know how, you feel about this matter, but I'm quite sure, that day by day, it would be a good thing, if we could, carefully, and seriously, examine ourselves, with regard, to our own wisdom.

The things that we think, or the things that we think, we know, and upon which we base, our actions. You remember, don't you, how the Holy Ghost, speaking, by one of the prophets, in an ancient day, he looked upon, the wise men, of the age, in which he was living, and he knew, according to God's word, that what they were teaching, was the rankest of foolishness.

[12 : 48] And what's he saying? To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not, according to my word, there is no truth in them, there is no real wisdom in them, their knowledge, their knowledge, is just simply, the knowledge, of acquired human wisdom.

But it's not true. And consequently, friends, if that be, the nature of our wisdom, if our wisdom, is in conflict, with Christ, and his word, and his salvation, if we think, that we need not, to be saved from sin, and we are not guilty, in the sight of God, and there is no need, for an atonement, to be made, for our guilt, that we can, cast aside, as it were, that blood of Jesus, that Peter tells us, is so precious, in the sight of God, and esteem it to be, an unworthy, or ignoble thing.

Well then, friends, how true, is the word of Christ? If any man, would follow me, let him, take up his cross, by denying himself, and taking up his cross, and follow me.

Friends, there is the necessity, of the denial, of wisdom. God forbid, that in your, hearts and mine, and I speak most affectionately, out of a sense, and the institution, of certain other, statutes, upon, the statute book, to die, which would legalize, things that are, completely contrary, to the living word, of God, the word, of the living God.

What are we going to do, about this man? Well, Christ, he stands in the midst, of unbelievers, and also, professed believers, and he says, if any man, our friends, there it is, whosoever, will come after me, let him, deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

[14 : 44] Oh, it seems to me, a very solemn thing, when there are so many, that refuse to deny, their wisdom, their own wisdom, and there, my friends, subject, the wisdom, that is in their own nature, that the word of God, says is the foolishness, before the wisdom of God, to refuse, to subject, that wisdom, to the revealed wisdom, of God.

What said the Lord? What said his word? How hath our God spoken? Is that, the thing that you and I, would look to? Why said the Lord, to his people, of the past day, they that honour me, and remember friends, this is the way, of honouring him, the denying, of our own wisdom, one aspect of it, if they that honour me, I will honour, but they that despise me, shall be like, dear Steve.

I don't know whether, you are seeking, the honour of men, or the honour of God. I believe, my friends, some of you, I know the case. The Lord has so, wrought upon you, and blessed you, that you really, would seek, the honour of God, and not the honour of men.

The praise of men, will one day, die upon their lips. You perhaps, won't hear the end, of their praises of you, because you, perhaps may die, before they did, but my dear friends, however much, you may have enjoyed, the praises of men, remember this, there is a time, when you will hear them, no more.

And then, what will be the case? Oh, saith the Lord Jesus Christ, to his disciples, and the people around him, whosoever, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

[16 : 29] And then, there is another thing, I think perhaps, that I might mention, as needing to be denied, and that is, self-confidence. I realise, of course, that this is very largely, taught to die, as being the most, valuable and necessary thing, to have plenty, of self-confidence, all the way, through the ages, friends, the true preachers, of the gospel, have had the preachers, the necessity, of the denial, of mere, self-confidence, and they have had, to teach, the necessity, of complete, dependence, upon God, in Christ Jesus, for everything.

If there is one thing, I would pray, to you as a people, dear as you are, to me, it is this, friend, that you might not, be left to sink, into the awful, morass of self-confidence, that only brings, pride, before God, and man, an abhorrent thing, in the sight, of the Lord, humility, is its delight, and thereby, the grace of God, may you be delivered, from this false, self-confidence, that can only, bring to ruin, a distance, from God, and from his grace, and there, my friend, may there be, wrought within your soul, and mine, a real, humble dependence, upon Jesus Christ.

You see, it was, self-confidence, that was the betrayal, of Peter, he was quite sure, that nothing, could be made, against him, he was quite sure, that his power, would stand, in strength, that his bow, would never be broken, that he would, always be able, to keep the enemies, of his soul, at the distance, that he would, never violate, the counsels, of Jesus Christ, that he would, always love, and follow him, and obey him, and then, in the hour of temptation, as Christ warned him, he fell dreadfully, not irremediately, thanks be to God, for that, he fell dreadfully, but there was, a remedy, but you know, friends, there wasn't any, remedy in himself, all he could do, when he fell, so dreadfully, was to, go out, and weep bitterly, the remedy, wasn't in himself, he couldn't, wipe away his tears, and he couldn't, deliver him, from his sorrow, himself, from his sorrow, and he couldn't, my friends, and make himself, happy, in the midst, of his distress, death, night, he needed, one, to wipe his tears, away, and restore, his soul, and Christ, did it, you know, oh, he did it, even to this, self-confident man, who had proved, the fantasy, and pulsity, of his self-confidence, the fact, that it was, nothing but weakness, and there was, no strength, in him, and yet, the Lord came, and restored, his soul, and raised him, unto the gate, oh, think of those words, at the end, of one of the gospel, where the Lord, is dealing, with his servant,

Peter, by the sea of Galilee, he turns to Peter, and he says, Peter, do you love me, more than these, is your love, to me, so great, that really, everybody else, in comparison, with the man, of your love, is completely, inconsistent, ah, says Peter, Lord, thou knowest, all things, thou knowest, that I love, I'm dependent, upon thee, for the love, I'm dependent, upon thee, for the exercise, of it, if I shall, continue in wise, of love, and devotion, to thee, Lord, it must be, by thy grace, communicated, to my soul, but Lord, thou knowest, that thou hast, dropped into my heart, love to thee, and give me grace, Lord, and I would, follow thee, denying, self confidence, denying, self confidence, then there's another thing, I feel, friends, that in this world, we decide, the Lord teaches, that he says, that he'll deny, love, and that is, of self righteousness, there was, a class, of people, in the days, of the Lord,

Jesus Christ, that were, dreadful enemies, of his person, and the reason, why they were, such great enemies, of his person, friends, was because, he taught, the evil, of self righteousness, the evil, of the Pharisees, they hated, Christ, for this, to think, that there should be, one, who stood in their midst, and just simply, toppled them down, from the pinnacle, of religious respectability, and self righteousness, and there they were, prostrated in the dust, before God, and had to depend, upon this, man, who had suddenly, appeared, in their midst, and had to depend, upon it, for salvation, from sin, of which, their own, self righteousness, was but one aspect, of it, of course, when they couldn't, receive this, it was impossible, to receive this, and no, you can't receive it, you know, the apostle Paul, was one, of that same breed, he had the same, thing in his heart, he was taught, in the same, dreadful things, that these people, were taught him, they said, as long as you, keep the terms, of the Lord, you passed upon, the right days, and you observed, the right peace, and you made, the right kind, of confession, and you prayed, the requisite number, of times, and as long as, you've gone through, all the ceremonies, of initiation, into religion, and you've maintained, them right the way, through your life, when you come to the end, well of course, this is what will stand, you in good stead, my friends,

[21 : 54] I wonder, what we really, are resting in, the hope of our soul, for time, and for eternity, whether it would be, good for us now, and good for us, hereafter, what are we really, resting in, is it the work, of another, or is it our own, is it the righteousness, of Christ, or is it our own, self righteousness, do we depend, upon our own, world, or the work, of the dear, son of God, that came from heaven, to perform, for man, the very thing, that he was tested, you know, dear John the Baptist, this, he apprehends, the truth, of this very wonderful, it was a great, glorious day, when there, Christ appeared, by the sea of Galilee, by the river Jordan, and there, John looks upon him, and he points, to his disciples, around him, and says, behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away, the sin of the world, and he appears, another day, and it's the same, proclamation, John hasn't had, occasion, to alter his opinion, or make, any alteration, in the statement, which would glorify,

Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, is his teacher, concerning this, behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away, the sin of the world, you know, friends, this, is the very, the very denial, of parasyism, is the denial, of self-righteousness, when there, a poor sinner, a believing soul, looks to Christ, for everything, destitute, of all, that the law, requires of them, and they look away, solely and wholly, to Jesus Christ, for the reception, of their person, and of their friends, ah, behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away, the sin of the world, behold, the Lamb of God, through whom, a holy God, receiveth the guilty, and delighted in them, behold, the Lamb of God, oh, friends, I would say to you, tonight, in connection, with this, word of the Lord, Jesus Christ, so rich in wisdom, and in grace, behold, the Lamb, behold, the Lamb, whosoever would come after me, let him deny himself, of his self-righteousness, and take up his cross, and follow him, blessing characters, who, like the Apostle Paul, who was, such a righteous man, in himself, and in his own estimation, of himself, and consequently, my friends, he found, no beauty in Christ, he didn't see anything, that was desirable, in the Nazaree, he was a persecutor, of the Lord, and of his people, and the time comes, when the Lord, meets him, upon the Damascus road, and lies, righteousness, to the line, and judgment, to the plough, in his heart, and conscience, and all, my friends, what do we find him doing there, crying, for mercy, crying to God, making mention, of the name, of Jesus Christ, and later on, the Apostle, picks up his pen, or his stylus, or whatever it was, he was writing, this letter with, and what's he say, those things, that one time, were so precious, to me, that I looked to, and depended upon, for my acceptance, before God, those that, like Calvary drops, that I may win Christ, and be found, in him, not having, my own righteousness, but the righteousness, which is of God, by faith, and so friends,

I feel that we can say, tonight, that in this matter of denial, there is a denial, of worldly wisdom, however glorious, it may seem to be, to ask, a subordination, of all wisdom, in this matter of denial, to the wisdom, and the revelation, of God, concerning Jesus Christ, there is, my friends, a denial, of self-confidence, that only, leadeth to pride, and arrogance, of spirit, before God, and man, and a denial, of self-righteousness, but there is another thing, and that is, I feel, friends, we can say, with regard, to this denial, there is a denial, of sinful ways, and sinful habits, I don't know, whether, you feel in accord, with that or not, but let me assure you, of this, my friends, that you just, can't, run, and obey, two masters, at the same time, you just, can't be servants, of God, and servants, of being, you can't, have the world, in one hand, and Christ, in the other, the gospel, is a very, distinguishing word, we are either, wholehearted, legal hearted, followers, of Christ, or else, my friends, our profession, of discipleship, with only a mockery,

Christ has said, come out, from among them, from the world, and his ways, and his delights, and his pleasures, come out, from those ways, of stead, said, that have been, so attractive, to you, and have filled, your heart, with such admiration, and you desire, to be good, that have been, so pleasing, to your flesh, come out, from among them, and be separate, father, and touch, not the unclean thing, you say, the Bible, is full of prohibitions, it's always telling us, what we ought not, to do, our friends, but it doesn't, end there, you know, no, it doesn't, Christ's words, don't end there, what's he saying, and I will be, a father, unto you, I've lost, my natural father, but my friends, I'm thankful, that I've got a father, faith tells me, that I've got a father, experience, proves to me, that I've got a father, I've known, the love of that father, and the grace, of that father, and the care, and the mercy, of that father, why he sent, his own dear son, into the world, that I might live, through him, a poor man, who was dead, instead, oh friends, and I will be, a father, unto you, and he shall be, my sons, and my daughter, saith the Lord,

God Almighty, oh, there is a negation, but don't forget, the teaching of our God, is very positive, as well friends, oh, it's a well balanced, gospel, is the gospel, of the grace of God, you know, when the Lord, does say to his people, come out, and leave it, and his call is heard, see the wisdom, and the love of it, it isn't just simply, my friends, a prohibition, of things, that we want, to indulge ourselves in, but the Lord says, here's the way, of peace, and here's the way, of true happiness, and blessing, here's the way, of heart contentment, here's the way, of enlargement, of your person, and of your soul, and of your spirit, here's the good way, look ye, look ye, and I will be, a father unto you, and ye shall be, my sons, and daughters, saith the Lord, God Almighty, ah, friends, there is a denial, of sin, and sinful ways, and sinful habits, you may say to me, Mr. Rowell, you haven't said much, about the dreadful, prevailing of sin, within the person, my friends,

[28 : 58] I told you this morning, you know, that our God, in Christ, was a victorious God, I did, I told you, that the things, that were committed, into his hand, would not fail, and although, you may be, very weak, in hours of temptation, beloved, may God, give you grace, to commit yourself, into the hand, of that one, of whom it says, he shall not fail, nor be discut, he giveth grace, according to the need, it's equal, to the hour of danger, weak indeed, you are, before Satan's temptation, but he is, mighty to save, mighty to save, oh, friends, it's only a four weak man, that testifies, like this, but I prove, the power, of the grace, of my God, oh, he is sufficient, for the needs, of the tempted one, another thing, I feel, that perhaps, I might just mention here, as being, a matter of denial, and that is, a reputation, friends, that isn't in Christ, that doesn't glorify Christ, you see, ah, there are some persons, you know, they have striven after, a good reputation, among men, but all my friends, to gain, that good reputation, among men, was as big, because, to get the praises, of men, the plaudits, of the crowd, who is either, behind the estimation, of their fellows, in some particular, walk of life, or some particular, occupation, and what is going, to be the cost, of it, my friends, a denial of Christ, the closing, of your mouth, a refusal, to confess him, in whatever company, you may be in, friends,

I tell you this, a reputation, at such a cost, as that, is not worth having, it's a dangerous, reputation, it's a reputation, that will be, for your harm, and not, for your benefit, anything, that denies, Christ, in reputation, or in the matter, of the enjoyments, of our life, let me assure you, to indulge, a dangerous thing, to our souls, oh it is, God grant, that we may, hear this word, friends, hear this word, that says, so carefully, by the lips, of Jesus, whosoever, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, you may say to me, perhaps tonight, well Mr. Rowley, it will be very practical, this evening, friends, I would have given anything, this week, for the Lord, to have put some other text, upon my mind, the seven days now, I've known, that I should have to preach, in this text, here at the sea, or sometime today, I would have given anything, to have had another text, to bring to you, to see, what the purpose of it,

I just don't know, but oh, I do trust, that you may hear, the word, and the voice, of Jesus Christ, blame me, for every defect, blame me, for every infirmity, blame me, for everything, my friends, that you may find, opposing, but oh, God give you grace, that you may have an ear, to hear, what God, the Lord, does speak, through his own, in love, and mercy, to want for sinners, upon this earth, as there is the wisdom, of his counsel, he says, whosoever, will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, the Lord, and his blessing, Amen.