

## **SELF-DENIAL**

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Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—Matt. 16:24.

And if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully.— 11 Tim. 2:5.

The great light which is flooding the earth in these days reveals that it is God's good will for men to be free and healthy and prosperous and happy. Many, seeing this truth, have tried to lay hold of these blessings without any understanding of the wonderful process through which they are to be made manifest. They want the gifts without the giver, and they think they can step right over into possession of his gifts without transformation from mortal spiritual mind and body. By a certain degree of faith and mental effort they do seem to gain their desires to some extent, but their good is only temporary because no one is crowned "except he have contended lawfully;" that is, unless he brings every thought in his conscious and subconscious mind into harmony with the law of his being. So we should not strive for wonderful appearances that shall satisfy those who seek a sign, but rather be gloriously content with the knowledge that the great regenerative work is being carried on in us day by day, and that the body temple is being built without sound of hammer or anything to attract the attention of those who see and hear and judge in externals.

The lack of understanding that self must be given up in order to enter into the Kingdom causes many seekers after good to become impatient, unhappy, and dissatisfied, when they pray and do not get for the personal man what he is demanding. Out of this error comes the rebellious cry: "Why do I not demonstrate? Why am I not prospered? Why am I not healed? Why does not God give me this, or that?" Jesus said: "In your patience ye shall win your souls." Those who know that the letting go of self is necessary and understand the blessings that are to come through this change in them are patient in all their experiences. and do not resist the spirit when it is showing them something of self to be put away.

Desire is not wrong in itself. It has its source in the need of man, and is the means of leading him out into the expression of all his powers. Through desire he reaches for and lays hold of whatever he thinks he requires for his well-being. It is therefore clear that desire is good, but like all of man's powers it has been misunderstood and made to serve unrighteous ends. All wrong desire comes from the

"flesh," the personal self; the desires of this self are the desires that are to be denied.

True self-denial does not make one negative, or rob him of anything that is really his. It is merely the giving up, from day to day, of human selfishness. Every act of giving up is accompanied by a positive act of appropriation; that is, we simply give up the old and lay hold of the new. The reason self-denial has fallen into disfavor with some earnest people is because they have looked at it as a continual giving up, without seeing that for every denial there must be an affirmation; for every negative, a positive; for every loss, a gain.

When Paul told Timothy that a man was not crowned except he "have contended lawfully," he gave expression to a truth that is written in letters of fire throughout the universe. There is no true and lasting success along any line except it is brought about under the divine law. The crown of life is won by those who give up everything pertaining to the personal that they may grow into spiritual righteousness. The way to life is by a complete transformation of the old man through daily dying to self, and daily living in Christ.

While the principle back of self-denial is always the same, the experiences of those who are in the overcoming life are not necessarily similar, but may be entirely different. For instance, one who is much given to personal ambition and the tendency to be domineering and too self-assertive, needs to be disciplined in a very different manner from one who is timid and lacking in self-confidence. One of strong personality, in order to "have contended lawfully" under the divine law, should conform to the meekness and lowliness and humility of the Christ. A timid one should keep in mind his oneness with All-power, and his equality with all other sons in Christ.

To be successful in the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, one should not allow himself to be moved by the thoughts or words of people who judge by appearances. When once you have covenanted with the Lord to follow him in the regeneration, you will think and live in an entirely new way, and your friends of the world will not understand you. You cannot afford to waste time and substance conforming to their ideas or trying to explain your life to them. Go serenely on your way and wait until the mighty work going on within you becomes manifest and tells its own story.

What is selfishness? What is the difference *between* selfishness *and* unselfishness?

The difference between selfishness and unselfishness is: selfishness is a personal desire; it is continually wanting something that it has not. It is very limited in its understanding, and thinks it can own something exclusively. Unselfishness belongs to the individual. It knows that God's good belongs to all alike. It prays as if it had already received,

because it knows that it is heir to all the Father has and that the good that belongs to it belongs alike to every child of God. It takes the attitude that Jesus took, and is confident of its possession.

Personal self takes the attitude of a menial, and is always working for wages and rewards, but the true self realizes its divine inheritance and believes in it and has what it wants because it is right. Our Father has never limited us. Divine mind is full of unlimited possessions, which become individualized to each one who realizes that he is divine mind's center of expression.