

LESSON 8



EXCEPT A CORN OF WHEAT DIE

Scripture Texts: *John 12:23-26; Matthew 10:37-39; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3; Romans 6:8, 8:13, 12:1; Revelation 12:11*

We cannot live the self-life and the Christ-life at the same time. Self-life must die that Christ may live in us and that we may be His disciples.

MEMORY VERSE: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* *John 12:24*

Old Man or New Man

The old man counsels, "Do your best, break off bad habits, work hard, improve yourself, be good." Perhaps this is the biggest mistake made in the religious world—build a good record before man, unite with God, and you will get to Heaven. What does Jesus say to the old man? Read Romans 6:6 and Colossians 3:9-10.

Christ's Death and Ours

In John 12:23-26 we find that as His death drew very near, Jesus spoke of Himself as a corn of wheat that must die to bear fruit. Only His death could bring about the saving of sinners. From Himself, Jesus turned immediately to speaking of all people. Jesus must die; so must we.

Before Jesus died physically He died to self. He left Heaven, gave up ease, comfort, and honor. He hated His life for our sake. For Him, we must hate ours to death and bury it. This planting will bear fruit of righteousness and union with Christ.

In Matthew 10:37-39 we see that sacrifice of self to Christ requires us to love Him above ourselves, relatives, or friends.

Bearing the cross is often thought of as suffering such afflictions and troubles as life brings. But sinners experience these, too, often with courage and patience. When Jesus took His Cross, He was going to voluntary death. To take up our cross is to voluntarily die to self and the world. Death is a separation. Separate from self-interests. Yield your will, lose your life, make Christ all in all. Without this death, Jesus said, we cannot be His disciples (Luke 14:27).

Death, the Way to Life

In Galatians 2:20 we see that Paul had identified himself with Christ. He was submerged in Him, crucified with Him. He drew life from Him. He ate and drank of Christ's flesh and blood (Lesson 7). Paul had died; his new life was Christ. This was a continuing experience as he formed his action by it. He said, "I die daily." We must kill the old man and stand on his grave with a sword every day.

In Colossians 3:3, writing to brethren in Christ, Paul said that they were dead. Death to sin freed them to be hid with Christ in God. Safely hidden, their lives joined with Christ's—this is eternal life begun in this world. It is certainly worth the loss of corrupt, doomed self-life.

In Romans 6:8 we accept His sacrificial death as being for us personally. Joined with Him until His death is our death; His life is our life. This is baptism into Jesus Christ, as we read in verses 3-6.

Water baptism symbolizes this. The burial in water pictures death to sinful self—the old man. Rising from the water pictures new life in Christ. The complete meaning of water baptism includes the filling with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-6). Jesus' death purchased this for us (Hebrews 10:19). Complete death to self is rightly pictured only by complete immersion in water.

Wheat that refuses to die bears no fruit, has no continuing life, no communion with its Maker, no part in His work, no companionship with living grains, and no growth. What does solitary existence mean to a human soul? Jesus said that where He is, there would His servant be.

How to Die

Romans 8:13 tells us that the wrong kind of life brings death. The right kind of death brings life (Galatians 6:8). We must put to death the deeds of the body and repent of them. How can we cast out the inclinations of natural, sinful self? Through the Spirit, by yielding all to Him (Romans 6:13-16). Only by coupling our decisions and actions with His supernatural power can we do it or continue to live the Christian life.

Old Testament saints killed and burned animals in sacrifice to God. God still wants sacrifice from us, but now it is our living bodies that He desires, as we are told in Romans 12:1. His saving and cleansing power makes our bodies holy and acceptable to Him. We yield them to Him to use forever. We are given details of how they are to be used in the completion of Chapter 12.

Satan is not overcome by half measures. Revelation 12:11 tells us of saints who loved not their lives unto the death. Having died to self they could die for Christ without fear. The victory was won not when the head dropped lifeless, but when they had laid all on the altar of Christ—life, possessions, ambitions, loves, will, and all. Repent, put faith in Christ, and lay all on His altar. The flame of the Holy Spirit will consume it and live in your heart.

Counterfeit Death

Down through history many schools of thought have tried with varied success various methods of conquering self. One is inflicted suffering. Self is to be killed, not tortured. Beds of spikes do not cleanse away sin or kill the old man. Another is rigorous abstinence. We are to deny self not deny TO self. Choosing to abstain from foods we like will not meet the offering for sin.

Another method is repression. The old man is not to be repressed, but put to death. By determined effort one can thwart many an evil impulse. This is not enough. This will only cause self to grow bigger, feeding on the pride of its own efforts and sacrifices. None of these methods are taking your cross and following Jesus.

When self is dead, one does not seek recognition or praise. He does not desire to be seen. He is not jealous of praise or favor shown to another. He does not care who receives credit for what is done, as long as the work is successful. He forgets what he does or suffers and gives Christ all the glory.

JUST A THOUGHT

If the church aims to hit sin, it should pull the trigger.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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