

Dealing with self-life

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Let us turn to **John 12: 23-26**.

John 12: 23-26

- 23 And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
- 24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- 25 "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.
- 26 "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, My Father will honor him.

We know that the Lord Jesus said these words as He approached the hour of the cross. He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." It was a reference to the event of the cross.

In this context, He explained to us that what He was doing was like a grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying so that it will bear much fruit. There is no sin in the Lord Jesus and this description of the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying is an expression of His self-giving for the good of others. It is a manifestation of grace from a heart of pure love. He need not have done it, He was not obliged to do it, but He did it because of love.

He gave up Himself so that others could be saved. The apostle Paul was so appreciative that he wrote in **Galatians** regarding the Lord Jesus: "... the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself ... for me."

So because the Lord Jesus gave up Himself in this way - He went through the suffering, He went through the pain for the sake of other people, He gave up Himself - as a result, it has borne much fruit. Many, many people have been helped. Many have received of His grace, have been transformed. The Lord Jesus tells us He could do this basically because He was sinless. His life was pure. He could die for the sins of the world. (We will die for our own sins because we are sinners.)

But then the Lord Jesus went on to **verse 25**. What He had done, this spirit of giving of Himself, was also meant to be something that His disciples should learn. It was not just for Himself alone. It was something that He wanted His disciples to learn.

So He said: "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."

This verse does not apply to the Lord Jesus. He did not love the world. There was no sin in Him. He need not deal with the self-life. He was pure, He was perfect. He was referring to His disciples. He was warning them, cautioning them, exhorting them, helping them so that they could prepare themselves to become like Him.

The Lord Jesus had given an example by the way He gave up Himself for the welfare of other people. His disciples were to learn to do likewise.

But how could they do that if their lives were filled with sin - self-centredness, self-seeking, jealousy, rivalry and pride? They could not do that. Therefore, they had to deal with their own lives.

They had to deal with the problem of the self-life – pride and self-seeking, jealousy and rivalry – they had to deal with this. If they did not deal with this, they would lose their lives. They would not be able to find life eternal. They would not be with the Lord.

What the Lord Jesus did in giving up Himself at the cross is the highest level of service: service to God, service for mankind. And that is the kind of service that we must seek: pure, self-giving.

So for the disciples to learn to serve, they must first not love their lives. They must hate their lives in this world. They must give up themselves, give up the world: Seek not anything for their own glory, their own desires, own preferences, but seek what is good, what is pleasing to God, what is truly for the well-being of others.

Even as we thank Him for what He has done for us, let us remember it is not a passive thing – just to thank Him because He has helped us.

He is calling us to a higher plane of living. He wants us to be like Him; He wants us to follow Him.

But to do that, we have to deal with the problem of sin, of self-life. We have to hate our life in this world. We must not cling on to what we desire for ourselves. When we give up and deal with that and become pure like Him, then He says, "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

As we give up our lives in this way, as we deal with any area that hinders us from our walk with God, it is then that we can properly serve Him.

We must follow Him, and when we do that, He says, "where I am, there My servant will be also".

We will be one with Him. He will be with us wherever we go, whatever we do. There will be fruitfulness in our lives no matter what we do because we will be submitted to Him, we will be listening to Him; we will be dependent on Him. We will not be doing our own things; we will not be seeking our own ways.

And it is in that context, He says, "the Father will honor him". True glory will come from God. God will honour those who truly give up themselves to Him, and out of true love for others.

So it is a long road, it is a difficult path. To deal with the problem of self-life is a very difficult path, but it is what God expects of us, it is what He is calling us towards.

We cannot treat it lightly. We must persevere however long it takes, however difficult it is. It is something that as Christians, we struggle with but God understands. He knows the difficulties that we go through. He wants to help us, each one of us.

The question is: Are we willing to be helped? To be helped is not just passively to say: "Yes, I thank you for the gift of life. I thank you for forgiveness." It requires repentance, it requires our commitment; it requires that we persevere to follow Him - deal with whatever is negative in our lives and deal with it drastically and deeply. It is then that God will be pleased to dwell in us. He will manifest His glory in our lives, and through us He wants to reach the world.

When there is true love in our hearts, the world will know that we are disciples of Christ. The message of the gospel will be manifest in a form that man can receive, they can understand. It will not be just words, but words come alive in the way we live.

Let us ask Him to help us to ponder over our lives and to consider: Are we appreciative of what He has done for us? Are we deeply grateful to Him that He has saved us, forgiven us? Are we appreciative of His calling to be like Him, to live according to the example He has set for us? Will we exert ourselves to develop that kind of quality whereby He will be pleased with us and God will be glad to make His abode in us?