

The Problem of Not Denying Yourself

Hebrews 9:27 (NKJV) — 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

Matthew 16:24–27 (NKJV) — 24 Then Jesus said to His **disciples**, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him (1) deny himself, and (2) take up his cross, and (3) follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it

- I. Obeying self leads to death
 - A. **WE MUST DENY OURSELVES TO SAVE OURSELVES!** Disown self, disregard self, forsake self, renounce self, reject self, refuse self, restrain self, subdue self.

WE MUST DENY OURSELVES TO SAVE OURSELVES!

- B. Self is what caused the problem in the beginning. Adam and Eve turned their backs on God. We do too when we go on and do things our own way.
- C. We cannot trust our best judgment!

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV) — 12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

- 1. Even the best things we think are right, are still wrong for us.
- 2. At some point in life we **need** to learn this. We seek to learn a lot of things but most important is to learn to deny ourselves.
- 3. There are things that seem right to us but they only bring us things with problems.

Isaiah 53:6 (NKJV) — 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way;

- 4. Many today are suffering from poor choices. But there is a better way! God's way!

Proverbs 10:22 (NKJV) — 22 The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it.

- D. God created us and he knows what is best for us. He has a plan to lead us to what is best for us.

**GOD KNOWS WHAT'S BEST FOR US
HE HAS A PLAN TO LEAD US TO HIS BEST BLESSINGS**

1. The best thing you can do with your life is to submit to God. He is the one that knows how to take care of you. But you can't do this thinking for yourself.
 - a. You don't know what is right for you!
 2. What was the reason Jesus said he came for in John 10:10? This is why Jesus said we must deny ourselves. He wants us to have abundant life here and eternal life with him.
- E. Too many of us are caught up in trying to do things for our comfort. We are not willing to make the commitments to discipline ourselves for the kingdom of God. We don't want to do what God tells us to do.
1. We want to achieve position and power and we want to do things our way rather than trust and obey God.
 2. Think about this: why are we so stubborn to want to do things our way and not God's way? Is he not the creator of the universe? Has he not told us so very clearly he has plans for us. Plan to experience peace and not evil, plans to give us hope and a future.
- F. Many of you sit out there today and you are suffering because of decisions you have made. It didn't have to be this way. There was a much better way!
1. Unfortunately, most of us have to learn the hard way.
 2. We should stay close to him and stay in his will by obeying his every word.

Deuteronomy 30:15–16 (NKJV) — 15 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His

statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

Deuteronomy 30:19–20 (NKJV) — 19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

THE BEST THING FOR US TO EXPERIENCE A GREAT LIFE IS TO UNQUESTIONABLY OBEY GOD

- G. Jesus told us a story about how much he loves us and how much he wants to do good for us in a very familiar story. He tells us, all we have to do to receive the best in life is stay in our father's house obeying his will.
1. He tells the story of a family where the father is the head. He controls the order of the house and everybody has to submit to his will. But there was one son that wanted to do things his own way.
 2. That one son was a rebellious son and he tells this story to describe how each of us are like that one son.
 3. From the story, we learn how much better it is to stay in submission to God than it is to do things our own way.

II. The Loving Father and the Rebellious Son

Luke 15:11–16 (NKJV) — 11 Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me.*’ So he divided to them *his* livelihood.

- A. This was about complete selfishness. All this younger son was thinking about was his own will and things he wanted to do for himself.
1. He wanted to be free of his father's authority. Like so many of us, we want to do things our own way!
 2. We see also his father owed him nothing! Likewise, God owes us nothing.
 3. He wanted his inheritance now! He was not willing to wait until the proper time.
 4. Selfishness makes one insensitive to our Father in heaven and to others here on earth.
 - a. Selfishness also keeps you from seeing your real true blessings God is providing.
 - b. Remember, God even told Cain he would be blessed if he did right.
- B. This young man wanted to go his own way and live life his way not the way his father wanted him to live it.
1. Many of us ignore the way God has said for us to live and we live it the way we want to live it.
 2. Sooner or later our rebellion will catch up to us. The ways that we do things that are contrary to God will lead us to death and after that we will face the judgment from God for our rebellion.
 - a. Money & success
 - b. Gambling
 - c. alcohol
 - d. drugs
 - e. sex - fornication, adultery, homosexual acts
 - f. abortion
 - g. hi class prostitution

- h. he wanted to spend money the way he wanted to spend it. He did not want to contribute to the family's prosperity.

C. The father, just like our heavenly father allowed him to make his own choices and let him go his own way.

1. Remember there is a way that seems right to us but it is not the best way.
2. If our choices are not for God then our choices, even if thinking about self, are about sin. Then when we choose to sin we get worse and worse in sin because our sin blinds us of the sin itself. Our hearts become hardened and it is hard to turn around.
3. God knows this and that's the reason he tells us:

Romans 12:1–2 (NKJV) — 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.* 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

D. We demand wrongfully... what we want from our Father in heaven too. He too, let's us go on and do what we want to do.

1. Even though Adam and Eve had it all, they wanted to do things their own way.
 - a. They did what they wanted and then they hid from God.
2. We have the very same nature that they had. Man's nature does not change. And neither does God!
3. We want to do what we want and we want to hide from God.
4. Look at what's going on around us today. We are denying what God has said in his word to be true. We want to go our own way.

JUST LIKE ADAM AND EVE SEPARATED THEMSELVES FROM GOD WE ALSO WANT TO SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM GOD.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

- E. He went to a far-off country where he could have things his way, a place where his father could not interfere with his decisions. He was being stupid!
- F. He was looking for a good time. He was looking to enjoy life. He was searching for an abundant life but he would find nothing in this world can replace what God can do for you!
 - 1. God is the answer to all of our problems. We may seek here and there but we will never find satisfaction until we deny ourselves and submit to God.
- G. Just this young man did not understand the ways of the world, we don't understand the ways of the world. We think we do but naturally our pride causes us to fall.

Proverbs 16:18 (NKJV) — 18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

- H. We see after a while he spends all of his money.
 - 1. Many of us have arrived at that point already. We don't have much in life but we can say.... we made our own decisions and our own choices. But is our life truly better?
 - 2. God says

Isaiah 55:2 (NKJV) — 2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

LIFE AND MONEY ARE WASTED WHEN SPENT ON SINFUL THINGS

14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

- I. First his money goes, then his food. Then, he has nothing! Why did this happen? Because he did everything his way and did not submit to the knowledge and will of his father.

**THE GRACE OF GOD ALLOWS SIN TO GET PROGRESSIVE IN IT'S PAIN
ALLOWING US A CHANCE TO TURN AROUND BEFORE IT GETS TOO LATE**

J. Come back to God before it is too late! This young man did not come back. He thought it best to get a job and work for somebody else rather than return back home.

1. Many of us will try anything other than doing what God says!
Stupid!

YOU CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS!

IF YOU WILL NOT BE RULED BY GOD YOU WILL BE RULED BY SATAN

2. Joshua made the same statement many years before.

Joshua 24:15 (NKJV) — 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

3. Elijah made a similar one

1 Kings 18:21 (NKJV) — 21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people answered him not a word.

4. Paul also

Romans 6:16 (NKJV) — 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

5. Life his choice driven we have to decide who we are going to serve.
6. See, in the case of Elijah they did not want to make any decision. Don't be like that today. Get ready to make a decision to follow the Lord. His way is the only way you can enjoy life.

K. Still this young man does things his own way.

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled

his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*.

**IF IT IS NOT OF GOD, WHAT PROVIDES YOUR PLEASURE
WILL IN TIME PROVIDE YOUR PAIN**

- L. The land that provided his pleasure now provides his pain. He now hits rock bottom.
 - 1. Notice also, he no longer has many friends.
 - 2. Notice the friends he has now. Who are the?
 - 3. Notice also, his problems did not start at the beginning. They progressively got worse. Now he has nothing!
 - 4. This is the story of many. They think they can find the answer themselves. Life has nothing for you without Christ! But you can never have Christ until you deny yourself and give yourself to him.

Luke 15:17–19 (NKJV) — 17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’” ’

- M. **He came to himself.** What does this mean? It meant that while he was doing all that he was doing he was not in his right mind. Why was he not in his right mind? Satan was blinding in his mind!

2 Corinthians 4:3–5 (NKJV) — 3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.

- 1. That's why Satan hates pastors who truly teach the word of God. Because the word of God frees their minds.

- a. Satan does not want them attending churches where the pastor teaches the truth of God's word.
- b. In fact, Satan opens people away from church is like Guiding Light because they learn to think differently from the world. They learn to think like children of God.

N. **He came to himself.** He finally started thinking. How wonderful this is. He realized he was wrong. He said he would go back to his father.

- 1. This is what I pray we all will do. We will come to ourselves.
- 2. We will recognize like him, there is a better way! God has a better way for us!
- 3. What we must learn to do is to acknowledge our wrongdoing.
- 4. We must come to realize the hell we are in today is a result of our own making.

O. ***“Father, I have sinned against heaven***

- 1. this is the true point

P. See what he says in verse 18

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

- 1. We must learn to repent also. Stop doing what we were doing to rebel and confess our sin.

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) — 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- a. But therein is our major problem. We do not want to confess we are wrong.
- b. Once again, we refuse to deny ourselves!

**IF WE ARE WILLING AND OBEDIENT WE WILL EAT THE BEST OF THE LAND
IF WE RESIST AND REBEL WE WILL BE DEVoured BY THE LAND**

Q. Some of us today are in denial, but not denial of self. We are in the denial of the Righteousness of God.

1. We think God will not hold us accountable for our sin. We must repent and confess our sin before God. We cannot do that unless we did not ourselves.
2. Some of us sit smugly thinking we do not have to do anything. This young man had to work in his father's house. You too are expected to work in your father's house, but for some reason you refuse to submit to God and do what he says therefore, you have not denied yourself.
3. Rather, you exalt yourself above God!
4. Don't you think it's time you come to you self?

R. Again this young man comes to himself and says **I will arise and go to my father,**

1. This young man had rebelled against his father. He disrespected him and when his own way but when he came to himself he said I will arise.
2. In a few moments, I'm going to ask you to arise. I pray that this message will help you to come to yourself and will help you to realize you may have gone away from the father also but you can arise and come back.
3. Life may be dealing you blow after blow, trouble after trouble, problem after problem, but realize this God has a better plan!

Psalm 34:18 (NKJV) — 18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

4. It's time for you too, to deny yourself and recognize God loves you and wants to bless you, but you must deny yourself and submit to his ways.

Luke 15:20–21 (NKJV) — 20 “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the

son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

S. We see here the story of God our father. While still a long way away his father had been waiting on him and when he saw him he ran to him.

1. This is like our father God. When we come home the father rejoices and the angels also.

Luke 15:10 (NKJV) — 10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

2. Like this father, our heavenly father is waiting on you to come to yourself and arise and come back to him. In spite of what you may have done he has no condemnation for you. All he has for you is love.

T. Notice now his humility. What was a prideful confident, prosperous young man when he left, comes back penniless broken and sorrowful. He prepares his speech but before he can finish getting out all of his words... The father interrupts:

Luke 15:22 (NKJV) — 22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet.

1. This shows us he was accepted even before he confessed. His father loved even when he had done wrong.

2. It doesn't matter what you have done today, God still loves you! He wants you to come home!

3. The father was restoring him to his position as a son. This means the father always saw him as his son who did not see the father as his father nor himself as his son. Remember he was blinded in his mind by Satan.

4. The father immediately reminds him that he is his child.

U. *This is the way God feels about you!* He is waiting on you to come home!

- V. The best robe, put a ring on his hand, sandals on his feet. In other words, restored my son to his previous status. Then there was rejoicing!

Luke 15:23–24 (NKJV) — 23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.