

Die to Self, Surrender to Christ

Paul Washer | illbehonest.com

So Paul says: "I urge you, brethren." Here he's an apostle! I mean, one of the big twelve, you can't get much bigger than this. And he says: brothers, listen to me. So here we see, he says: "Therefore I urge you brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice."

Paul is going to tell these people to give their life away. He needs something of a motivation. If I were to tell someone: "Look, you need to give your life away" they would probably ask "Why?". And Paul says here: "by the mercies of God." Because of God's mercies demonstrated to you through Jesus Christ, give your life away. You say, but what are these mercies?

First of all, it's a plural. The multi-faceted mercies of God. I mean it doesn't matter how you look at it, you're always going to come up with a bigger and better picture. You look at the mercies of God from one side and you think maybe it's one dimensional like most things in our life but then you go behind the thing and you discover something completely new. And then you go to one side or another or you go below and look up, you go up and look down and you try to grasp and comprehend the beauty of this mercy that's been given to you. And you say: "What mercy!" You go through the first 11 chapters of this book of Romans and you discover what mercy. The fact that we were all lost and deserve condemnation. The fact that we could not save ourselves by our own works and didn't even want to. The fact that God sent His only begotten precious, holy Son to die on a tree carrying our sin and condemned under our judgement. And when He died, He paid the price and after paying the price He rose again from the dead and forty days later He was exalted in the Heavens. He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High and He sat there as God's man for you. And he ever lives to intercede on your behalf.

Now, do you need more motivation? Because if you do, you're lost. If you need me to tell you that if you serve God you'll get a Mercedes, you're lost. If you need me to tell you that if you serve God he'll heal your body and fix every one of your problems, if you need that, you're lost. If Jesus is not enough to motivate you to godly living, you don't know Jesus. So let us keep it simple: Christ and Christ alone, no one else. I have need of nothing else, it is well with my soul.

I want my sons to put their life at God's disposal. "Here I am Lord, speak to your servant. What do you want from me?" That's all. That's all that really matters. And as a matter of fact, my dear friend, when you're on your deathbed and you will be there, when you are on your deathbed, the only thing that is going to be running through your mind is, did you put your life at His disposal? I mean, I want to tell you something right now. If I were to go to Ethiopia and start 500 churches in 3 years but God told me to be a janitor in a small mid-western town, I'd be disobedient planting all those churches. It's not to do great things, it is to obey God. It is to put your life at His disposal. And that is it. Isn't it simple?

I had a guy walking into my office one time and saying "you know, the Christian life is very very complicated". I said "no, it's not". He said "yes, it is," and I said "no, it's not" and I won because I was the pastor. I could also whoop him. I said "no, it's not complicated," he said "but

there are so many decisions." I said "no, there's not." I said "God's already made all the decisions, son." "Now you've got the same problem I do: you're going to obey or not. You're going to put your life there or not."

And I want you to understand, let's go back to that word "brethren." When I'm preaching this to you, as my preacher back home says, my pastor, he says "I've got one finger pointing at you and I've got three pointing back at me. This is as much for me as it is for you today." All of us struggle with this. You always say "we've got so many struggles and so many things". No, you only have one struggle and it's the same one I have: are you going to put your life at God's disposal? That's the only thing. It's really the only one thing that matters. And I guarantee you, I struggle with it just as much as you do.

Are you going to put your life at God's disposal? Christ first! Lord, what do you want me to do today? What do you want me to see? What do you want me to say? What do you want me to hear? How do you want me to spend what you've given me? How do you want me to do everything you want me to do? How do you want it, Lord? Here I am, Lord. This goes back again to being at His disposal. I remember one time in seminary I decided: I'm going to live one day totally at the disposal of God. Well, that was an ambitious thing to do. I didn't make it but I did notice some differences. I remember just... You know, when you're young and you're in the ministry, you ought to just be locked away for a few years, because you're just not right in the head. So I just got outside of the door of my house "OK, Lord, now what do you want me to do?" It's like "Well, Paul, you've got a class in five minutes so you better get there." But I'm trying to walk across campus, just being sensitive. And just being goofy is what I was. But I'm just trying, just with every step: Lord, where do you want... And then, all of a sudden, there out at the left, there was a lady that I've talked to several times. She was an older lady, a cook there at the seminary. And she came walking out and was standing there kind of sad. And I'm just trying to be this spiritual giant. And the first time I felt like God told me anything that morning was "Go, tell her about my Son." And guess what? Grrrr. Oh, I was willing to walk around like a zombie, looking spiritual, but when it came to just loving somebody... "Go, tell her about me." And I remember having to collapse like this and just walk over there. That day she received Christ. Sure it was goofy, but God will honor a heart that makes any kind of attempt to be at His disposal.

Sometimes I think we love Day-Timers because we can somehow write God out of our day. "God, I want to make every minute productive for you. Every five minutes I'm going to break down" and what we're doing is "Lord, I want to be so active that you have no time to tell me what to do." Sometimes I think I must struggle so much but there's one thing this hard head of mine can not pound through, and that's the love of Christ. I can make every excuse in the world not to be obedient, every excuse in the world not to do what I want to do, and then "bang", like a sledgehammer comes what? The love of Christ. The love of Christ! It just knocks me to my knees.

That is the thing I want you to see about the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus. Listen to this, Jesus was poor - and that's all there is to it. He was. Regardless of what the TV-preachers tell you, the guy was poor. He didn't ride around in a king's chariot, He was poor. He was many times tired, He many times had anguish. He many times had all the things that you and I have to deal with but here's the thing about Jesus Christ: He was never empty. He was never empty.

And why was He never empty? Because He had food to eat that we know not of. He was never empty for the same reason we usually are. He wasn't empty because He was about doing the will of His Father. He was putting His life at the disposal of His Father. You're empty? You're ever feeling empty? Guess what, let a little red flag go up. I do. "I just feel so empty, I need a vacation. I just feel so empty, I need to get away from the ministry for a while. I just feel so empty, I just need to get by myself." No, I just feel so empty, I need to put myself at God's disposal and I won't be empty any more. Put myself at God's disposal.

Now, I have to step back here for a second because I've got some of you in here who are always under guilt that you're not doing enough for God. So when I say that, you're going "Yeah, I just need to get back in there and do some more!" No, not get back in there and do some more for the church or anybody else. I said put yourself at God's disposal, there's a big difference. Draw near unto God. He might want you to draw near unto Him and rest. He might want you to draw near unto Him and read through the book of John. He might want you to draw near unto Him and cut half of your activities. What I'm talking about is putting yourself at His disposal, not doing something extra.

A beautiful passage in Scripture, in Ephesians 5:2, it says: "Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Just give yourself to God. "Well, I have nothing to give." How dare you talk about God that way? You say "Hold it, pastor, I'm not talking about God that way, I'm talking about me, I have nothing to give." If you're saying you have nothing to give, you're saying that God gave you nothing and I don't believe that. God gives every one of His children gifts and graces. None of this false humility stuff. It's better to say: what He has given me, I shall return to Him. Never say "I have nothing to give", never. False humility is a great destroyer of many things. "Your problem is that you're not in me. Your problem is that you're not dwelling and putting your life at my disposal. When you do that, Paul, I'll give you more joy than anything else."

And that's something you all need to understand, we all need to understand: it's not where we are, it who He is and our relationship to Him. That is something very very important. I want you to know: most of you are striving to be happy and that's not necessarily bad, you're just doing it totally the wrong way. The times that I have died to self have been very few. But the times that I have died to self and laid down my life as a sacrifice, put myself at His disposal, I have been the happiest man on the face of the earth. Even though it might have cost me greatly, there was such a peace, such an overwhelming joy. And all the times, and there have been many, when I've put Paul Washer before other people, which actually meant I've put Paul Washer before Jesus Christ the Lord, I have been the most miserable human being on the face of the earth. Can anyone out there identify with what I'm saying? Well then, stop it! Sometimes, theologically we just want to get through all these things: theologically why do I do this and why do I do that? Just stop it. I've got a friend of mine down in Peru and one day he walked in and he told his mum "Mum, when I do like this with my arm, my arm hurts." She said "well, stop doing that with your arm and it won't hurt any more."

It's the same thing. Those of you who are truly Christians, you know the times when you have surrendered yourself to Christ, you know the times when you've put Christ before everything, when you've presented your life to Him as a sacrifice and you know the joy of that. And you also know the misery of doing the opposite. The thing about it is: die. I know this isn't

too seeker-friendly and I'm glad about that. Die to yourself. You want to fix your marriage? Die to yourself and offer yourself to God. You want a fix to everything. But what you can't fix: die to yourself. "One who tries to gain his life will lose it." (Mt 16:25) "Except a kernel falls to the ground and dies, it bears no fruit. But if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit." (Jn 12:24) It's all about Jesus Christ being first, and second, and third, and fourth and fifth... What I'm saying is: don't put Jesus first, Jesus is everything! He's not just first in the rank, He is everything; the whole shooting match, as we might say. He's everything. Lay down your life.

I was with Charo several years ago in Peru and she's always been a very very wise person and after teaching about 4-5 classes, some Romanian girls... It was in Romania. Some Romanian girls came up to her and they said "We don't need to hear anything else you've got to say". Charo said "Why?". She said "Because you're saying the same thing every time." Charo said, "Yes, it's really that simple. Read the Word of God, seek to submit your life to Him. Pray for power. Lay down your life. Live for others, not for yourself. Die to self that you might have life." That you might have life. Die to yourself that you might have life. That's what it all comes down to.

I have never given anything away that I have felt sorry for. I have kept things that I have regretted. I have never been self-sacrificing, that I look back on it now and say "I wish I hadn't done that". But I have been selfish so many times and said "I wish I hadn't done that". It is really what Jesus said: die and give your life to Him. Die. Should we be theologically correct? Yes, we should. Should we do the other things? Yes, we should. Does any of it matter if we don't do this first thing? No. Die to ourselves, give our lives away. Not self-promotion, self-demotion so that Christ might be promoted. He must increase, I must decrease. And oh, did he have joy, that John the Baptist. Tonight we're going to talk about offering your body. Why did he say "body"? For very important reasons. He didn't say "give your heart", he said "give your body" and we're going to talk about that tonight.

If you're here this morning, what can I say to you? You know, I'll be honest with you: I'm not expecting you to hear this message and just be flat out transformed and everything go right the rest of your life. I'm more hoping this message would be like a cocklebur under the saddle and it'll be always this reminder to you: Are you empty? Then die. Are you miserable? Then die to self and live for Christ. Are you just feeling all dirty inside? Then put yourself at His disposal. Draw near unto Him. A constant reminder of these things that you and I are called to habitually, continually die to self and to give our lives to God.

Some of you young people out there, you are going to terribly mess your life up, you are. And I tell you why: because you're going to take the reigns and you're going to run with it. And when you do, well, in a few years you'll be in my office. You're going to take the steering wheel and you're going to say "I'll drive my own car" and you're going to regret it all the days of your life. I implore you to throw down the reigns, to let go of the steering wheel and to submit to the sovereignty of Christ. Not to the sovereignty of this preacher, because this preacher... You know what preaching is like? Sometimes I don't like the way it's done. And I'll tell you why: because it looks like I've got some message and I'm like God's copilot or something and I'm giving the message to you. When in fact it is: the message, if it is of God, it's like I should speak it, run down there, sit and listen to it just like you. This is not on the authority of some preacher. You've read the Bible yourself, do you agree with what I just said about Romans 12, verse 1? It's not

about submitting to a pastor, a church or anything else but submitting to Jesus Christ and putting your life at His disposal and becoming everything that He desires you to be. But you have to die, you have to die.

If you're not a Christian here today and you're saying "what is all this lunacy?" That's exactly what it is. "Come, lose your life for a carpenter's son, for a mad man who died for a dream and you'll have the faith His first followers had and you'll feel the weight of His beam." It is lunacy to someone who doesn't know God. To die to self in this world... We live in the Roman Empire where it's all about self-promotion and being strong and powerful; getting everything so that people will applaud you. Not in the kingdom: it's not about going up the ladder, it's about going down it. It's not about having your feet washed, it's about washing other people's feet. Jesus Christ, knowing where He came from, where He was going, basically knowing that He was God in the flesh, put on a towel and wiped everybody's feet. Now that's strong self-esteem. That's what this is about. And it's just as much for me as it is for you. But if you don't know the Lord, this is what the Bible wants you to know: the Bible says something that is extremely offensive, can you handle it? The Bible says something extremely offensive: you are not a victim to society, you are not a victim of other people's problems, you Sir, you Ma'am, you child, you're the problem. Just like me. The Bible says: "we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We're not lost sheep looking for a shepherd, we're God-hating rebels running with all our life to get away from Him because we want to be sovereign lord over our own universe. And the Bible says, if you keep doing that, you'll be even more destroyed.

The Bible calls you to repent, to recognize your sin and to hate it. And to run back to God, a just God, who could not forgive you because you have broken every law. Accept that He sent His Son to pay for every crime you've ever committed. The payment has been made, justice has been satisfied. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. That's what it's about. Your good works are like filthy rags, they're dead before God and have no account. They're just like mine. The only merit, the only virtue we have is Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected from the dead, our only hope and our only glory. Our only hope.