

Changing by Grace

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Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23 (emphasis)

In order to follow Jesus, how often do you take up your cross, your personal "death-to-selfishness instrument"?

You are on a daily journey of change. When you repented and received Christ's atoning death for your forgiveness, He saved you from the penalty of your sin, giving you eternal life. At the same time, you "died" with Christ to your old self-willed nature. You were "raised" with Christ to a new life lived in obedience to God. You no longer have to live like the old self-willed "tree" – you can daily put the root to death.

Read Colossians 2:13-15 and Romans 6:11-12.

Now, you are living out what it looks like to consider yourself "dead" to sin. Jesus is continually saving you from the power that sin has over you. Your self-willed sinful nature is at war against your desire to follow and obey Jesus. But the process of overcoming selfishness is accomplished as you daily, obediently yield to Jesus and remain connected in community with other believers. You are daily living less like the old self-centered, self-ruled tree and more like the new Christ-centered, Christ-ruled tree. As a result, you are bearing very different fruit!

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

How is Jesus described in this passage?

If you turn to Him when you are tempted to be self-serving, what will you receive?

Depend on God's grace to yield to His way, not your own. Grace is God's unmerited pardon when you stumble, His supernatural help and strength beyond your own, and His influence working within to transform you. Avoid the temptation to die to your sinful nature by sheer will-power. You will fail – or, worse, succeed. The point is to submit yourself in obedience to Christ's rule, yielding to His transforming work within you.



"I will allow that the mere effort of will... may add to the man's power over his lower nature; but in that very nature it is God who must rule and not the man, how very well he may mean. From a man's rule of himself... arises the huge danger of nourishing, by the pride of self-conquest, a far worse than ever the unchained animal self – the demoniac self. True victory over self is the victory of God in the man, not of the man alone. It is not subjugation that is enough that is enough, but subjugation by God. In whatever man does without God, he must fail miserably – or succeed more miserably. No portion of a man may rule another, for God, not the man, created it..." (MacDonald 68-69).

Intentionally turn from relying on your own strength of will to change. Depend on the Holy Spirit and His grace to *put to death the misdeed* of the self-willed nature. Day by day, as you obey Him one step at a time, He will transform you from being self-centered to Christ – ruled.

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh [sinful, self-ruled nature], to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit [depending on the Spirit’s grace and power] you put to death the misdeed of the body, you will live. Romans 8:12-13 (emphasis added)

Take time now to pray. Ask the Lord for His grace and strength to obey Him from a yielded heart.