

Day 7 ~ SELF-DENIAL

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'"
Matthew 16:24

Christ had for the first time definitely announced that He would have to suffer much and be killed and be raised again. *"Peter rebuked Him, saying, 'Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee.'"* Christ's answer was, *"Get thee behind Me, Satan."* The spirit of Peter, seeking to turn Him away from the cross and its suffering, was nothing but Satan tempting Him to turn aside from the path which God had appointed as our way of salvation.

Christ then adds the words of our text, in which He uses for the second time the words *"take up the cross."* But with that He uses a most significant expression revealing what is implied in the cross: *"If any man come after Me, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, and take up his cross."*

When Adam sinned, he fell out of the life of heaven and of God into the life of the world and of self. Self-pleasing, self-sufficiency, self-exaltation, become the law of his life. When Jesus Christ came to restore man to his original place, *"being in the form of God, HE EMPTIED HIMSELF, taking the form of a servant, and HUMBLED HIMSELF even to the death of the cross."* What He has done Himself, He asks of all who desire to follow Him: *"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself."*

Instead of denying himself, Peter denied his Lord: *"I know not the man."* When a man learns to obey Christ's commands, he says of HIMSELF: *"I know not the man."* **The secret of true discipleship is to bear the cross, to acknowledge the death sentence that has been passed on self, and to deny any right that self has to rule over us.**

Death to self is to be the Christian's watchword. The surrender to Christ is to be so entire, the surrender for Christ's sake to live for those around us so complete, that self is never allowed to come down from the cross to which it has been crucified, but is ever kept in the place of death.

Let us listen to the voice of Jesus: *"Deny self,"* and ask that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, as the disciples of a Christ who denied Himself for us, we may ever live as those in whom self has been crucified with Christ, and in whom the crucified Christ now lives as Lord and Master.