

# From the book “**The Master's Indwelling**” By Andrew Murray

## Chapter 2 – **THE SELF LIFE** (*words in italics added*)

Matt. 16: 24. (Jesus) **If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**

In the 13th verse we read that Jesus asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” When they had answered, He asked them, “But whom do you say that I am?” And in verse 16 Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Jesus answered and said unto him: “Blessed are You, Simon Barjonas, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven. And I say also to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (*of the Father's Spirit revealing through His word, to a person's spirit, the knowledge of Me*) I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Then in verse 21 we read how Jesus began to tell His disciples of His approaching death; and in verse 22 how Peter began to rebuke Him, saying, “Be it far from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You.” But Jesus turned and said to Peter; “Get behind me, Satan; You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.”

We often hear about Christians who compromise their lives and the question arises, what lies at the root of it? What is the reason that so many Christians are wasting their lives in the terrible bondage of the world instead of living in the manifestation and the privilege and the glory of the child of God? And another question perhaps comes to us: What can be the reason that when we see a thing is wrong and strive against it we cannot conquer it? What can be the reason that we have a hundred times prayed and vowed, yet here we are still living a mingled, divided, half-hearted life?

### **The Root of the Trouble**

To those two questions there is one answer: it is self that is the root of the whole trouble. And therefore, if any one asks me, “How can I get rid of this compromised life?” the answer would not be, “You must do this, or that, or the other thing,” but the answer would be, “A new life from above, the life of Christ, must take the place of the self-life; then alone can we be conquerors.”

Let us consider from these words of our text the one word, “self.” Jesus said to Peter: “**If anyone wants to come after me let him deny himself, his own self, and take up the cross and follow me.**” This is a mark of the disciple; it is the secret of the Christian life. Deny self *and reckon you died to self through Christ's crucifixion, which you share in when you abide “in Christ”*; and all will come right. Note that Peter was a believer, and a believer who had been taught by the Holy Spirit. He had given an answer that pleased Christ wonderfully: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Do not think that this was anything but extraordinary. Peter knew it; and Christ saw that the Holy Spirit of the Father had been teaching him, for He said: “Blessed are you, Simon Barjonas.”

But note how strong the carnal man still is in Peter. Christ speaks of His cross; Peter could only understand about the glory, "You are the Son of God;" but about His cross and His death he could not understand, and he ventured in his self-confidence to say, "Lord, that shall never be; You cannot be crucified and die." And Christ had to rebuke him: "Get behind me, Satan. You are not mindful of the things of God." You are talking like a mere carnal man (*governed by your human nature*), and not as the Spirit of God would teach you. Then Christ went on to say, "Remember, it is not only I who am to be crucified, but you as well; it is not only I who am to die, but you also. If a man wants to be my disciple, he must deny self, and he must take up his cross and follow me, in death." Let us dwell upon this one word, "self." It is only as we learn to know what self is that we really know what is at the root of all our failure, and are prepared to go to Christ for deliverance.

### **The nature of the Self life**

Self is the power with which God has created and endowed every intelligent creature. Self is the very center of a created being. And why did God give the angels or man a self? The object of this self was that we might bring it as an empty vessel unto God; that He might put into it His life. God gave me the power of self-determination, that I might bring this self every day and say: "Oh, God, work in it; I offer it to You." God wanted a vessel into which He might pour out His divine fullness of beauty, wisdom and power; and so He created the world, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, the trees, and the flowers, and the grass, which all show forth the riches of His wisdom, and beauty, and goodness. But they do it without knowing what they do.

Then God created the angels with a self and a will, to see whether they would come and voluntarily yield themselves to Him as vessels for Him to fill. But alas! they did not all do that. There was one at the head of a great company, and he began to look upon himself, and to think of the wonderful powers with which God had endowed him, and to delight in himself. He began to think: "Must such a being as I always remain dependent on God?" He exalted himself, pride asserted itself in separation from God, and that very moment he became, instead of an angel in Heaven, a devil in hell. Self turned to God is the glory of allowing the Creator to reveal Himself in us. Self turned away from God is the very darkness and fire of hell.

We all know the terrible story of what then took place; God created man, and Satan came in the form of a serpent and tempted Eve with the thought of becoming as God, having an independent self, knowing good and evil. And while he spoke with her, he breathed into her, in those words, the very poison and the very pride of hell. His own evil spirit, the very poison of hell, entered humanity, and it is this cursed self that we have inherited from our first parents. It was that self that ruined and brought destruction upon this world, and all that there has been of sin, and of darkness, and of wretchedness, and of misery; and all that there will be throughout the countless ages of eternity in hell, will be nothing but the reign of self, the curse of self, separating man and turning him away from his God. And if we are to understand fully what Christ is to do for us, and are to become partakers of a full salvation, we must learn to know, and to hate, and to give up entirely this cursed self.

## The works of Self

Now what are the works of self? I might mention many, but let us take the simplest words that we are continually using: Self-will, self-confidence, self-exaltation. Self-will, pleasing self, is the great sin of man, and it is at the root of all that compromising with the world which is the ruin of so many. Men cannot understand why they should not please themselves and do their own will. Numbers of Christians have never understood the idea that a Christian is someone who is never to seek his own will, but is always to seek the will of God. He is someone in whom the very Spirit *and nature* of Christ lives, so he too has the nature of Jesus that cries: "I come to do Your will, Oh, My God!" (Heb 10:9).

We find Christians pleasing themselves in a thousand ways, and yet trying to be happy, and good, and useful; and they do not know that at the root of it all is self-will robbing them of God's blessing. Christ said to Peter, "Peter, deny yourself." But Peter through his actions said, "I will deny my Lord and not myself." Christ had said to him the night before, "You will deny Me," (Mat 26:34) and Peter did.

What was the cause of this? Self-pleasing. He became afraid when the woman servant charged him with belonging to Jesus, and three times said, "I do not know this man" (Mat 26:74). He denied Christ. Just think of it! No wonder Peter wept those bitter tears. It was a choice between self, that ugly, cursed self, and that beautiful, blessed Son of God; and Peter chose self. No wonder that he thought: "Instead of denying myself, I have denied Jesus; what a choice I have made!" No wonder that he wept bitterly.

Christians, look at your own lives in the light of the words of Jesus. Do you find there self-will, self-pleasing? Remember this: every time you please yourself, you deny Jesus. It is one of the two. You must please Him only, and deny self, or you must please yourself and deny Him. Then follows self-confidence, self-trust, self-effort, and self-dependence. What was it that led Peter to deny Jesus? Christ had warned him; why did he not take warning? Self-confidence. He was so sure: "Lord, I love You. For three years I have followed You. Lord, I refuse to believe that I could ever deny You. I am ready to go to prison and to death." It was simply self-confidence.

People have often asked me, "What is the reason I fail?" I desire so earnestly, and pray so fervently, to live in God's will." And my answer generally is, "Simply because you trust yourself." They answer me: "No, I do not; I know I am not good; and I know that God is willing to keep me, and I put my trust in Jesus." But I reply, "No, my brother; no; if you trusted God and Jesus, you could not fall, but you trust yourself." Do let us believe that the cause of every failure in the Christian life is nothing but this. I trust this cursed self, instead of trusting Jesus. I trust my own strength and wisdom, instead of the almighty strength and wisdom of God. And that is why Christ says, "Self must be denied and die."

Then there is self-exaltation, another form of the works of self. How much pride and jealousy is there in the Christian world; how much sensitivity to what people say or think of us; how much desire of human praise and pleasing men, instead of always living in the presence of God, with the one thought: "Am I pleasing to Him?" Christ said, "How can you believe, you who receive honor from one another and don't seek honor from God?"

Seeking honor from each other renders a life of faith impossible. Self started from hell, it separated us from God, and it is a deceiver that always leads us astray from Jesus.

### **Getting rid of this cursed self**

Now comes the third point. What are we to do to get rid of it? Jesus answers us in the words of our text: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Note it well. I must deny myself and take Jesus himself as my death and my life. I must choose. There are two lives, the self life and the Christ life; I must choose one of the two. "Follow me," says our Lord, "make me the governor of your existence, the ruler of your conduct; give me your whole heart; follow me, and I will take care of you completely." Oh, friends, it is a solemn exchange we have set before us; to come and, seeing the danger of this self, with its pride and its wickedness, to cast ourselves before the Son of God, and say "I deny my own life, I take Your life to be mine."

Look at Peter again. Christ said to him, "Deny yourself, and follow me." Where was he to follow? Jesus led him, even though he failed; and where did he lead him? He led him on to Gethsemane, and there Peter failed, for he slept when he ought to have been awake, watching and praying; He led him on towards Calvary, to the place where Peter denied Him. Was that Christ's leading? Praise God, it was. The Holy Spirit had not yet come in His power; Peter was yet a carnal man; his spirit willing, but not able to conquer due to the weakness of human nature. What did Christ do? He led Peter on until he was broken down in utter self-abasement, and humbled in the depths of sorrow. Jesus led him on, past the grave, through the Resurrection, on to Pentecost and to the Holy Spirit, and in the Holy Spirit Christ with His divine life came, and then it was, "Christ now lives in me."

There is but one way of being delivered from this life of self. We must follow Christ, set our hearts upon Him, listen to His teachings, give ourselves up every day, that He may be all to us, and by the power of Christ the denial of self will be a blessed, unceasing reality. Never for one hour do I expect the Christian to reach a stage at which he can say, "I have no self to deny;" never for one moment in which he can say, "I do not need to deny self." No, this fellowship with the cross of Christ will be an unceasing denial of self every hour and every moment by the grace of God.

We are called upon to live the life of Christ, and Christ comes to live His life in us; but one thing must first take place; we must learn to hate this self, and to deny it. Let us pray fervently: "Lord God, self changed an archangel into a devil, and self ruined my first parents, and brought them out of Paradise into darkness and misery, and self has been the ruin of my life and the cause of every failure; Oh, reveal it to me." And then comes the blessed exchange, that a man is made willing and able to say: "Another will live the life for me, another will live within me, another will do all for me," Nothing else will do. Deny self; take up the cross, to die and live with Jesus; follow Him only. May He give us the grace to understand, and to receive, and to live the Christ life.

***2 Cor 5:15 He (Christ) died for me, that I who live should live no longer for myself, but for Him who died for me and rose again.***