



## Sermon notes

Preacher: Di Timberlake

Title: Are you dead yet?

Text: Galatians 2:20

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### Are you dead yet?

Psalm 20:4

*"May he grant your heart's desires and make all your plans succeed.*

*<sup>5</sup> May we shout for joy when we hear of your victory*

*and raise a victory banner in the name of our God.*

*May the LORD answer all your prayers."*

Psalm 37:4

*"Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires."*

Psalm 103:5

*"He fills my life with good things.*

*My youth is renewed like the eagles!"*

Psalm 145:19

*"He grants the desires of those who fear him;*

*he hears their cries for help and rescues them."*

Matthew 7:7

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."*

Matt 21:22

*"<sup>22</sup> If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

John 15:7

*"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*

We know God wants to bless us and wants to answer our prayers. We have just heard these scriptures.

This is the most preached topic of the Christian faith. God will bless you. God will provide for you. He is a good good Father. Just believe and you will get it all.

But what if you do everything right and still don't get what you want?

You have asked, endured, lived through trials and you still don't get what God has promised you.

If I follow the formula surely it will happen. If I follow God's plans according to His word, I will succeed in my life. He will bless me. That's what He promises.

We know the Bible does make these promises, but there is another side to our Christian walk with Jesus. It is totally opposite to the popular Christian message. It is the part that causes people to turn away from Jesus in huge numbers. The message is – you must die to yourself. You have to surrender everything.

It is the message of the cross. We love the redemptive part of the cross. That Jesus died on the cross for our sins so we can be clean and live with Him for eternity. To know God and experience Him in our lives. We speak about His great love for us that He gave everything for us, including His life, so that we can live. So that we may have life in abundance. That we can be called a friend of Jesus. The wonderful message of the cross.

What we are not so crazy about is the fact that He expects us to go with Him. We avoid this part of the gospel. We are expected to go to the cross with Jesus.

In Matthew 16: 24, Jesus says, *"Whoever wants to be my disciples, must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me."*

In Luke 9 it says to we are to take up our cross DAILY. It is quite clear what Jesus says here. Deny – yourself. Take – up – your – cross.

Matthew 16:25, Jesus goes on to say, *"Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."* Jesus says clearly, you have to surrender to Me. You don't get everything you want.

In John 12:24 Jesus says, *"Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."*

We want to be fruitful for God according to His purpose for His glory but we are not dying. Why am I not bearing fruit? Just die! If we get stuck in the ground, it is dark and lonely and purposeless. We cannot bear fruit if we don't die.

Jesus repeats these words in verse 25

John 12: 25 *"Whoever loves his life will lose it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life...."*

Paul said in Galatians 2:20 in the New King James translation, *"I have been crucified with Christ."* We love that Jesus is crucified, not that we need to be up there with Him.

What does it mean to die to self?

The first time we die to self is when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. The "crucified" Paul talks about in this context is our old and sinful self is being crucified with Christ, and we are not living under the law anymore but we live under grace. Our old self dies and is surrendered to Jesus. We say, Jesus, you take over. I will follow You. I will obey You. What I want and think is best for my life, I hand over to You and say, "Have YOUR way, Lord. May Your will be done." We can quickly know how dead we are to self when we get frustrated, angry, impatient and irritated because we cannot get what we want, or when someone has disappointed us.

We may want to justify ourselves by saying "What I want is a good thing." We disguise it saying it is for His kingdom when actually it is for ourselves. When the answer is "No", how do you react? When we die to self, we submit ALL to God. Nothing of me, Lord. Everyone has to do this. We live in a sinful body. Our default is selfish, but every Christian has to submit. Nobody gets a free pass. It is called surrender. I am crucified with Christ.

Let me give you an example. How many of you have tried to dig a hole in solid ground? Have you ever tried to dig a hole in solid ground with a spoon? The spoon will probably bend and you may look for a spade, or a pick. It is hard hard work trying to dig this hole on your own. What do we do to soften the ground? We pour water on it. We soak the ground until it is soft enough to start digging. If our hearts were the hard ground, the Holy Spirit needs to come and water the ground, soak it until it is soft so the digging can start. When we try to do it ourselves, we fail. Allow the Holy Spirit to do the work. What do I need to do? I need to bring my effort and, in this picture, it is a spade. Submission is active. I need to come to the party and do my bit, together with God, in digging the hole. I have to be willing to dig where God leads me, with blood, sweat and many blisters to get the dirt out of my heart (the soil) so that God can plant new life.

There could be weeds in the soil as well. In our hearts these are the lies we have come to believe, the attitudes or thoughts we may have that are from our old self that need to be pulled out. When we pull a weed out, some of the soil comes with it. This is the pain we feel when God is uprooting the weeds in our hearts. We have to allow the Holy Spirit to soften us and we need to be willing to dig. We are now working in sync with God.

So, the Holy Spirit convicts me and I make a choice. Di, die to self. Submit to His will. So, the first day I allow the Holy Spirit to water my heart. I am motivated for God to work in my heart so I start digging. It's tough work but I want to dig until all of my selfish self has been taken out. The second day, I wake up and I have blisters on my hands, my back is sore and I have a headache from being in the sun. This is hard work. Not so much fun anymore.

When Jesus went to the cross, he knew the pain he would have to endure. He did not want to go through with it. He was beaten, tortured and then hung on a cross for us. There is pain in submission. There is sacrifice, giving up, allowing God to rip the weeds out. Digging deep, deep into our hearts where the seeds are hidden and refuse to die. Remember what Jesus said in John 12:24 Jesus says, "*Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*" Do we WANT to go through this? NO! Do we have to go through this? ABSOLUTELY!

This is submitting to God. Of giving up ourselves, our lives, the desires of our heart, to allow God to soften our hearts and work in us even though it is painful. We need to resist the temptation to give it up, leave it for another day and to take the easy road.

Interesting that in Galatians 2:20, Paul goes on to say, "*Nevertheless, I live.*" I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. I am dead but alive. What does Paul mean by this? He explains how this happens in verse 20. *<sup>20</sup> I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; ..... yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*"

Our true righteousness is based ONLY on a sincere belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. In believing that Jesus, who loved us, gave his life for us on the cross. In response to this, we surrender to Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to live in us and we are reborn. Many believe that once they have given their life to Jesus, they will wake up and do His will and not have to worry about anything. That He will give them the desires of their hearts and everything will just be better. When that doesn't happen, they get angry with God because He is not doing what he promised. This is the gospel message I talked about at the beginning. We want to hear the good stuff, but when we are told to die to self, we move around it and make excuses for ourselves and our behaviour.

We don't walk alone. Trying to deny ourselves and live God's way is super tough when we try it on our own. We are given an amazing assurance in [Philippians 2:13](#) New Living Translation *<sup>13</sup> "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."* God works in us when we allow Him to. He comes on the inside of us, through the Holy Spirit and He starts giving us His desires. He changes us from within, and as we continuously submit and die to self, we start aligning our desires with His. We are also given the power to do what pleases Him. When you want to give up, remember this verse. Make it personal ... For God is working in me, giving me the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

How do we die to self so we live in Christ Jesus?

**Read His Word, His letters to you.** If you have a hard time hearing God, read his letters. The Bible is full of His letters written for you, to you. God wants to communicate through his Word. I know many people use Tinder / Instagram. You can post your pictures and start a conversation with someone online. Many people make friends this way. You start off slowly with a sentence or two but soon you are texting each other several times a day. You start revealing more and more things about yourself, and they do the same. They say they like eating chocolate and you say you like cycling and being outdoors. They post pictures of the amazing chocolate they have tried and you post pictures of you and your friends cycling in the bush. This goes back and forth for a while and then your friend says he is coming up to Johannesburg for a family reunion. Cool. You decide to meet. You want to make an impression on him so you buy a huge box of chocolates as a welcome gift. When you see each other you say "So good to finally meet you" and you give him the chocolates. He then says to you, "Are you mad! I don't like chocolate and actually I am allergic to them." What? "Hang on, didn't you say you like chocolates in your texts to me? You spoke about it over and over again. You even sent pictures of all the chocolates you tasted..... You can't be the person I have been writing to." And he says, "Yes I am" and you say, "You just can't be the person that has

been writing to me. You don't sound like the person who has been writing to me. What you are saying and what is in these letters is not the same. So, you must be fake."

This is the same with God's letters or His words in the Bible to us. Anything that is being said in your mind that does not match up with the word of God, you know is not from God. That is not God's voice. When we read His word, we get to know Him and when we know Him, and a voice says something that is different to his letters to you, you know it's not him.

When Jesus says, we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him, He does not say in another letter that it is okay to do our own thing. There is a disconnect here. He is consistent. He says over and over again - those who want to keep their life will lose it and those who lose their life for His sake will keep it.

Some may say that it is difficult to read the Bible. Of course! You are used to worldly magazines, watching TV or YouTube. Of course it is different. It takes time to enjoy the taste of His words. It was like olives for me. I didn't like them when I started eating them but the person whom I was staying with kept putting them into her salads so I kept eating them and soon came to love them. Keep persevering and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a love for the Word. It will not happen overnight. When we read it, it changes our desires not because we have to but because God is working in us and we want to.

### **The second thing you can do, is to talk to Him**

We call this prayer. It is having constant conversations with your best friend. You get to know Him and recognise His voice because you know Him through his word. Find your own quiet place or "war room" to pray in, so you are able to sit still and listen. But, He is everywhere, so speak to Him everywhere. He wants to be part of your life more than you know, so speak to Him and share with Him constantly. Talk to him as your friend, as someone who understands you and where you can be yourself with. We have had many sermons on prayer, how to pray, why we pray and what we can do to pray. Now go and do it ... PRAY.

### **The Third Step is to live for Him**

The first two steps are about surrendering to Him, learning his word and praying.

But, can we continue to be a believer and get His word in us, and have nothing come out? It has to translate into living a life that pleases Him. Daily. It would be very sad if we came to church every week, spending time in His word and nothing in our life changes.

### **Talk about Him with others.**

Repeat His promises and His instructions (not just the good parts either).

Declare the word of God everywhere and at every opportunity. Not so you can remember the verses, it's to transform yourself from the inside out. You start to sound like Him. Your conversation topics start to change and you start changing with it. Sometimes when we speak, it

is so profound that we know it wasn't us. We know the Holy Spirit has given us the words to speak that is exactly what people need to hear. God's wisdom is perfect. Speak up.

Talk is cheap, what are you doing that gets Jesus out? Jesus said that people will know we are His disciples by what we do – our love is shown to others, not just spoken about. It's when we act like Jesus to others even when they don't deserve it. Despite what they have done to you or said to you. You respond like Jesus to them. When people see what we say, they will look at us closer in what we do.

**Now we have got Jesus out to others, we need more of Him in us, so we go back to step one and submit daily, read His Word daily, Pray His Word daily and then Live out His Word daily.**

We need to learn to let go and let God. It's called picking up our cross daily, being crucified with Christ and say "I don't live anymore. It is Christ who lives in me."

As Christians we are very happy to know the fact that Jesus went to the cross. What we often fail to recognise is that He wants us to go with Him.