

Guest Preacher Rev. Paul Amed

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Preacher: Rev. Paul Amed

[0 : 00] I want to consider now some of these words that I read this morning. I want to read from verse 34 again. And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

So here the Lord is spelling out what is involved for anyone who is prepared to follow him. Anyone who wants to follow the Lord. Here lies the secret, or perhaps better still, the revelation of what true discipleship is.

And just for a few moments, I want to concentrate on that and then go further into this passage. Nevertheless, there is a challenge. There's a challenge to forget self.

Jesus said it as simply and as profoundly as possible. If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself. And to deny oneself is far more than self-denial.

[1 : 10] We know there are many denominations, many churches today, and they're entering into this period of what they call Lent. And there are those who will give up chocolate, and they'll give up smoking, they may give up drinking for a month.

That's self-denial. But we're not called to that type of self-denial. We are called to deny ourselves, which is a resounding no to ourselves, but also a clear yes to the Lord.

A no to ourselves and a clear yes to the Lord. It's not an easy challenge to accept, because we're all prone. We're all prone to look after number one.

We know the disciples, many of the disciples long for high places, and we're no different. But to deny self is to abandon all hopes, aspirations, ambitions, desires, and goals that are centred in ourselves, and be determined.

To be determined that our lives should be Christ-centred and Christ-controlled. That should be the desire of every Christian, to be Christ-centred and Christ-controlled.

[2 : 30] The apostle reminds us, you are not your own, you were bought at a price. So glorify God in your body.

We are not our own. We've been purchased, redeemed. We belong to the Father. We belong to God. And He can work in us and through us, whatever He pleases. Ours is to respond.

Ours is to recognize His sovereignty over our lives. Therefore, we should deny ourselves and put Him in the first place.

You know, God doesn't want our success. He wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements. He demands our obedience. And so we are to deny ourselves.

There's also a challenge to full surrender and take up His cross. We are to take up our cross. He's calling us to die to ourselves, that we might live for Him.

[3 : 32] Paul writes of his own experience, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. We are to take up our cross. Now, our trials and our difficulties, no matter how harsh they may be, they are not our crosses.

Our cross is to identify ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. We're called to willingly bear the shame, the reproach that He bore, to suffer the humiliation and the rejection.

There was so much a way of His life. As we grow in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we become more and more Christ-like. That's taking up our cross.

We take up our cross when we choose the narrow way over the way of this world. Instead, regardless of the cost. We take up our cross when we live out biblical ethics in our personal lives and in our business lives.

[4 : 50] Regardless of the cost. To take up our cross is to willingly identify ourselves with Jesus Christ through His Word.

Regardless of what that may cost us personally, publicly, or financially. That's the way. That's the way loyalty to Christ is demonstrated.

Seeking to the power of the Holy Spirit. Seeking through feeding upon God's Word. Becoming more and more Christ-like. And then to take the flack. Taking the flack that that involves.

Because the world is changing so rapidly. And the persecution is coming even to our own land. And those who stand for Christ, they will face criticism.

And challenges. Even hatred. And all of that is taking up our cross. But not only are we to take up our cross, we're also to follow.

[5 : 50] To follow our Saviour. You know, the world may think that we're mad if we cast our all in with Jesus. If we cast our ambitions to the wind and seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The world may think we're fools if we yield ourselves unreservedly to Him. If we abandon ourselves to Christ.

But this life of abandonment and following Jesus, that's genuine living. That's life in all its reality. For those who abandon themselves to God will never be abandoned by Him.

Jesus said, My sheep hear My voice and I know them. They follow Me. I give them eternal life. And they shall never perish.

No one will snatch them out of My hand. Following Christ, as most of you I would imagine know, it brings a deep inward satisfaction.

[7 : 01] It defies a description that only the saved can know. That's why only the saved want to follow Jesus.

And we know we're not alone in following Jesus. Whether denying ourselves, taking up our cross, following Him, it's not done in our own strength because we could never do it in our own strength. It's the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in our lives. He enables us. He enables us to endure hardship for Christ.

Enables us to deny ourselves and to follow Him. Because following Christ it may bring in our experience many difficulties and we may have to go through many difficult places.

But that's what discipleship is all about. Even to the extremes. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me. Even to the extremes, our Lord has promised to be with us.

[8 : 05] Though He sits on the throne in glory, He has sent to us or given to us His Holy Spirit, His presence, His power, His peace. And so we're not alone. Because sometimes we can be so naive, sometimes we can be flippant in speaking about forgetting self and taking up our cross and following Jesus.

It all seems so easy as though we do that day by day from morning till night. Well, it's not easy. It was never meant to be easy. We are in a warfare against the God of this age. ourselves. We're not alone. And so it's possible. That's what the Lord once promised to deny ourselves, to take up our cross.

And no matter what sufferings we may have to endure for Jesus, we need to remember this.

Whatever we go through, whatever sufferings we may have to endure, there's a time coming when we shall share.

We shall share in His glory. For the Christian, the best is yet to be. Peter writes, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as something strange was happening to you.

[9 : 25] But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed.

Do you know, one moment, one moment in heaven and we shall be sorry that we ever complained. It's just a wonderful, isn't it, it's just a wonderful, a wonderful experience of knowing Christ, of walking with Christ, of knowing that we're not alone, believing that no weapon formed against us shall prosper, that He goes before us and makes the crooked places straight, that He upholds us day after day.

It's just so wonderful. And the Lord wants others to know that. He wants to speak to those who hold back from entering into that glorious salvation experience, those who may be afraid to come and to

confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour, those who've never tasted of His goodness, who know nothing of His love.

And so He continues in verse 35, for whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?

[10:52] this losing our life by saving it and saving our lives by losing them, it's very paradoxical to those who are strangers to faith in Christ.

The life spent in service for Christ is a saved life eternally. The life that is spent for self is a lost life eternally.

There's a natural inclination, I think I mentioned this, within us all to save our lives, to look after number one. Even though we are fallen creatures, there is this self-preserving instinct in us all. We want to live comfortably, to provide for the future, to make one's own choices, and of course with self at the very centre of everything.

What Jesus is saying here is that if you live your life that way, according to your own plans and your own purposes, if you live your life on your own terms, and you have nothing to do with Jesus Christ, then you're going to lose your life eternally.

[12:08] Lose your life eternally. Thinking about that this morning, I just noted these two expressions. Losing one's life because of love for this world equates with going to hell.

It equates with eternal death. And eternal death is not a cessation of existence, but rather the loss of fellowship with God.

It is to be forsaken by God. It is a continual dying in hell, but never dead.

Finding one's life for the love of Jesus Christ equates with going to heaven, of having eternal life.

That's living forever with God. But how can we expect to live with God in heaven forever if we're not prepared to live with him for a few years here on earth?

[13:16] Eternal life does not begin with death. It begins with faith. And to believe in heaven, it's not running away from life, but it is to run towards it.

Real life, abundant life, peaceful life, and eternal life. Christ calls us.

As he called many of us here, and we responded, but that call still goes out. Christ calls us to give of ourselves by responding to the gospel call, to repent and to believe, to confess and receive, and to surrender, and to consecrate our lives to him for his sake, and the gospels, dedicating ourselves to him, spirit, soul, and body, the whole person.

When you and I surrender our lives to God, when we relinquish our so-called rights and confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, when you acknowledge his control of all that you are, and all that you have, you will not only live an abundant life here and now, but you will have treasure in heaven.

Our service for Christ here, our living for Christ here, we are sending up treasures in heaven, and you will know what it is to fear God, and at the same time, not be afraid of him.

[14:57] And when you fear God, you will fear no one else, and you will fear nothing else. And then ultimately, when you live this earthly scene, you will go home to heaven, which the Bible describes as a place where he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more, for the former things have passed away.

But it doesn't end there. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be there, and they will reign forever and ever.

So those outside of Christ, those who have not yet closed in with him, you have a choice. Live your life on your terms, and ultimately lose it eternally.

Or you can come to Christ, you can express faith in Jesus Christ, you can receive that glorious salvation, and have him in and over your life, and you will enjoy eternal life, not only from now, but throughout eternity, throughout time, whatever that might be.

It seems so plain, so simple, so obvious, what men and women should do with such an offer as this. You would think, you would think, every church pew, every church chair, would be full, in all of our congregations across the island, with such a wonderful offer of the gospel, with such love, such grace, such mercy, freely offered to men and women.

[16:52] But no, how sad. John Calvin writes, the blindness of unbelievers in no way detracts from the clarity of the light of the gospel.

The sun is no less bright because blind men do not perceive it. And there are so many who are just blind to the wonders, the wonders of his grace, the wonders of his love.

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers. Those who refuse, those who are stubborn. And the devil moves in and blinds them to it, blinds them to free grace, to love, to heaven, to holiness.

Oswald Chambers remarks, there is nothing attractive about the gospel to the natural man. The only man or woman who finds the gospel attractive is the man or woman who is convicted of sin. And that's why you and I, we need to pray. We need to pray for the souls and for the lies and for the redemption of our loved ones, our colleagues, our friends. But we need to ask the Holy Spirit to convict them, to show them the deceitfulness of their own hearts, to convict them of their sin.

[18:12] We use that simple phrase sometimes, you wouldn't want a doctor unless you were sick. Men and women do not want Christ unless they know that they are lost, unless they know they are sinsick and hell bound.

And so we need to ask the Holy Spirit to convict men and women of their need, their emptiness and their sin, that they may flee to Jesus. Isn't that how you came to Christ?

You're conscious of your sin and of your lostness and there was no one else to go when you heard the gospel. And so you fled, you fled to Jesus Christ.

Jesus placed infinite value and still does on the soul as we read. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

For what can a man give in return for his soul? How valuable, how valuable is the soul? How valuable is your soul to yourself?

[19:18] You know, man does not have a soul, he is a soul. And if the soul be lost, the whole man is lost. And as God's eternal decrees have an end and no beginning, so the soul of men and women, they have a beginning without end.

in Genesis 2 and verse 7 we read, And the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And man became a living being. Or as the authorised version has it, man became a living soul. Therefore, as said, we don't have a soul, we are a soul.

The Bible also speaks of a hungry soul, a weary soul, a thirsty soul. How often do you and I identify with the psalmist who said, as a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

The Bible also speaks of a grieved soul. Why are you cast down, my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? And it even speaks of a soul that wants to know more and more of God's way and God's will.

[20:45] Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. Now, perhaps this morning we're not able to work it out or fathom it all out theologically, but it appears in these verses that the soul refers to the whole person.

We may speak about the body, the heart, the conscience, the flesh, but the soul is the powerhouse and it equates with our lives, our being and our spirits.

And it was for your soul and my soul that Jesus suffered and died and rose again. and just as our souls is revealed here as every area, every aspect of our emotions, of our body, of our lives.

And so when Christ suffered, it was every area, every aspect of his life, his emotions, his mind, his body.

Of course, it reminds me and should remind us all of the rich man who did not know what to do with all his grain, yet that all his barns and his silos were full to the brim.

[22:04] He didn't know what to do with his success and his excess. And we read in Luke chapter 12 and he said, I will do this, I will tear down my barns and build larger ones and there I will store all my grain and my goods and I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

Eat, drink and be merry. He spoke of his profits, I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. He spoke of his plenty and there I will store all my grain and all my goods.

He spoke of his pleasure. Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years. Eat, drink and be merry. This rich fool believed he was prepared for retirement and he looked into the future with great confidence.

He planned on ease and eating and entertainment. It's very significant that the man spoke of his goods first and then his soul last.

Whereas God, God reversed the order. will be reading Luke 12 and 20. But God said to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?

[23 : 39] God spoke of his soul first and his goods afterwards. What are the options then? Save your life and lose it?

Or lose your life for Jesus sake and the gospel and save it? According to an old fable, a man made an unusual agreement with death.

He told the grim reaper that he would willingly accompany him when he came to die. But only on one condition, that death would send a messenger well in advance to warn him.

The agreement was made. Weeks passed into months and months into years. Then one bitter winter evening, as the man sat alone thinking about all his material possessions, death suddenly entered the room and tapped him on the shoulder.

The man was startled and cried out in despair, you're here, you're here so soon and without warning. I thought we made an agreement. Death replied, I've more than kept my part, I have sent you many messengers, look at yourself in the mirror and you'll see some of them.

[25 : 06] As the man complied, death whispered, notice your hair, once it was full and black, now it is thin and white. consider the way you cock your head to listen to my voice because you can't hear so well.

Observe how close you get to the mirror so that you might see yourself clearly. Yes, I've sent many messengers through the years.

I've kept my part. It's too bad you didn't keep yours. I'm sorry you're not ready for me, but the time has come to leave.

And so it will be with you and I if we refuse the gospel, if we refuse to respond, to surrender, to deny, to take up our cross, to follow Christ.

On the other hand though, on the other hand, this is a day of grace, we don't do the gospel, you can commit your life to Jesus, right now. You can deny your own will, give up your own rights, surrender to his lordship and follow him faithfully.

[26 : 23] And at the end of that way, his way, you will find that the doors of hell are closed to you, yet the door of heaven has opened for you, as well as a wonderful mansion.

you say, perhaps, like many say, how can I do that? What must I do? What must I do to be saved? Well, it's not what you must do, it's what the Lord Jesus has already done for you. Speaking of his coming death, Jesus said, now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?

Father, save me from this error, but for this purpose I have come to this error. And just like your soul is troubled sometimes through trials and afflictions and perhaps not knowing what the future holds, Christ's soul was troubled.

His whole being was troubled because he was focused. He was focused of going to that cross, of suffering and dying for sinners. In the garden of Gethsemane, prior to Calvary, we read, then he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful even to death.

[27 : 48] His soul continues on his journey to be full of sorrow as he prepares to suffer and to die and to redeem our souls.

And what are his private thoughts that are revealed in Psalm 22, the Psalm of the Cross? Psalm 22 verse 19, But you, O Lord, do not be far off.

O you, my help, come quickly to my aid. Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life, from the power of the dock.

Deliver my soul from the sword. But there was no help. There was no answer. And his soul was pierced. His soul was pierced.

peace. And all who would come, all who would believe in him, might know the peace of God and peace with God. Remember those, that tremendous prophecy of Isaiah.

[28 : 48] But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

And with his wounds we are healed. He went to the cross for your soul and for my soul the whole of our beings.

He went to the cross to wash away our sins forever and ever. His soul was spied that you and I might know salvation.

His soul was rendered that your soul and my soul might be saved. the nails, the thaws, the pains they were all for our souls.

The shedding of blood on the cross was for the souls of sinners. Consider the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Jesus again. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.

[29 : 54] By his knowledge shall the righteous one my servant make many to be accounted righteous and he shall bear their iniquities.

You see when the Lord when the Lord completed his mission his ministry on the cross when he cried out it is finished and went home to glory he looked upon that finished work he saw the complete gambit of suffering the suffering of his soul and he had no regrets no regrets for all of his suffering and his agony every pain every tear every drop of blood and all the agony that Christ went through for him it was worth it because Christ's suffering and death brought about a satisfactory result many will be accounted righteous and he will bear their iniquities nothing else could truly satisfy God than to see Jesus bringing the souls of the redeemed into fellowship with himself and then to return home to glory to be with the father the writer of Hebrews says of him who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and he seated at the right hand of the throne of God and that that sitting down that sitting down with the father that confirmed that his ministry on earth upon the cross was finished sitting down with the father brought great satisfaction both to the father and to the son his soul was pounded pierced and pained

Jesus soul was pounded pierced and pain but remember this God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself we can't even begin to understand imagine believe how much God has already done for this world we complain and we pray and we see things happening we see we see so much blood shedding we see so much crime so much hatred so much division there are those who cry out where is your God oh God is on his throne God is working out his plan and his purpose God is in the heart of his people God is sovereign God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself so that by so that by faith your soul and my soul would delight would delight in forgiveness would have peace with

God would know the joy of the Lord and ultimately secure a place in the home of many mansions instead of going to hell to a lost eternity and to a place of many miseries you may be saying minister are you trying to frighten me into heaven are you trying to scare me into heaven I can never scare you into heaven I can never frighten you into heaven but the Holy Spirit can if he were to show you the deceitfulness the blackness and the rags of your own heart and your own sin when you and I reach the end of this earthly journey nothing we have or nothing we've achieved in this life will really matter all that will matter in those moments is our relationship with Jesus

Christ all that will matter is what we've done with Jesus Christ here on earth all that will matter in those moments is our relationship with him where will your soul go where will your soul go when you die are you willing to trade your soul for the right to do as you please to live your life on your own terms are you willing to spend eternity in hell for a few years of being your own god here because if you're lost that is exactly what you'll do you are trading the most valuable possession you have for the trinkets of this world John said whoever believes in me though he dies yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die do you believe this my friends do you believe this as

[35 : 07] Christians this morning all we know and we should know and denying ourselves and taking up our cross and following Jesus that shouldn't be a burden or a trial or a hard task that's what we should want to do every day of our lives because we know we know how blessed we are we know something some measure of what it costs Christ to redeem us Isaac Watts said this we're the whole realm of nature mine that we're an offering far too small love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all what a blessed people that we are freely invited dare we say commanded to come to come and to recognize that Christ is the king of kings and the lord of lords we can put it in so many ways but we pray the holy spirit will be working not only through this congregation not only this community but even at this weekend across the town convicting men and women of their sin showing them their lost souls yet at the same time showing them the one the one whose soul was sorrowful whose soul was pierced whose soul was was was was broken so that you and I could know life in all its fullness amen let's unite our hearts oh loving heavenly father we thank you again lord sometimes we try to go to the depths lord and we will never reach the depths of your love and your grace but we thank you that you were willing that you came in christ and you bore our sins in your own body on the tree the one who knew no sin was made sin for us that we

who knew so much sin through faith in him might be made the righteousness of god and so we bless you and thank you we thank you lord for your love a never ending love a love that even this day reaches out even into some of those darkest places of our world and to the darkest hearts of men and women a love that cannot be stayed a love that cannot be stopped because it is the love of god oh bless us all loving heavenly father with that assurance and that joy and that desire as we've heard to fully deny ourselves to take up our cross and to follow the lover and the redeemer of our souls we pray your blessing lord again upon this congregation we thank you again lord for for its minister bless him richly and bless each soul in this place may they know that assurance may they know that they are christ's and christ is theirs may they know they have been washed in the precious blood of the lamb they might say though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they be as crimson they shall be as wool what a blessed lord you are what a gracious redeemer what a loving saviour you'll be for us now we pray for jesus sake do we ask it amen let's close now by singing from a very familiar psalm psalm 23 psalm 23 the lord's my shepherd i'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness even for

his own name's sake psalm 23 to god's praise the lord's my shepherd i'll not want he makes me turn to lie in pastures clean clean he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he doth restore again thought and me man he then have answered pipe rouge and me ■■■■■■■■gest he or heal through he on■■■ you know he heard so

For His own lives say, Ye though I walk in death's acclaim, Yet will I fear not ill, For Thou art with me at Thy heart, And shall I become for still, My dear God, Thou hast furnished, In presence of my foes,

My head thou dost, With oil and oil, And my cup overflows, Goodness and mercy all my life, Thou surely follow me, And in Christ's eyes, Lord evermore, My dwelling place shall be.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Rest and abide with us all, Now and forevermore.

[42 : 52] Amen.