



## **The Message of Self-denial:**

**By**

**Anonymous**

- Christ's command: "...let him deny himself..."**
- Understanding the Biblical Definition of Self Denial**
- God's Will is Manifested from Obedient Behavior**
- Nothing we do is More Important than Glorifying God!**

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*"Something is terribly wrong in the Christian church today when professing Christians having one Bible, one God, one Savior, and one Spirit can arrive at such diverse and contradictory interpretations and conclusions from the same passages of scripture." Merrill Unger*

## Introduction

Most all of us can remember a few years ago the movie “The Passion of the Christ”. From that we certainly saw the passion of Jesus to fulfill the Word of God. But there was more going on; much more, there was the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

*“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and of the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spoke that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

*And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with holy angels.* (Mark 8:31-38)

Note the distinction between suffering and rejection. When we watched the movie, it does not reflex the rejection that has already occurred. Earlier in the week (Matthew 23) Jesus had gone to the temple and spoke to the elders, chief priests and scribes and before them he rebuked the old covenant because of their rejection of him as their Messiah.

Before that was to happen, above in Mark 8, Jesus is making it clear to his disciples that suffering applies to them no less then to himself. And so too it is our choice - we “must,” decide on our own, exercise our own volition to “deny” ourselves and in doing so bear our cross, which is our suffering for Christ’s sake and then we can follow. Denying our selves and bearing our cross “initiates” the act of following Jesus Christ.

This initiation is the detachment from things of the world...the dying of the old and the beginning of the new. It is a behavioral act that not only shows God and Jesus our Savior that we are committed to him but it also is a public display to the powerful in a supernatural spiritual world that we have become a child of God through Jesus Christ our Lord who took our sins: *“...nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them.”* (Colossians 2:14,15)

This is the first visible sign that we have become a chosen child of God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ his only begotten son... *“God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.”* (I Corinthians 1:27)

Let us never forget that as Christians, we ‘physically’ live in Satan’s world. We are surrounded by and live within a visual world of delusion; forget it not, this is Satan’s world. Unaware and blinded, the Christian churches in America are experiencing a *strong delusion*. Jesus did not

come to earth to bless American Christians with *comforts and riches*. This is a blatant contradiction of the command Jesus gave to us to *deny our selves*. Let's read again Mark 8:34: "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*"

Jesus has commanded us to A) *denying our self*; B) *take up our cross*; and C) *follow him*. As mentioned before, when watching a depiction of Jesus carrying his cross – Jesus suffered that burden. To take up your cross is to suffer the consequences of having **denied your self** for Christ. Then, through humility, comes the state of mind to *follow* Christ as a faithful and obedient witness to the world.

Our faith is then seen through our *behavior* to willingly trust and obey God, for there's no other way. The world sees in us a difference; by our obedient *behavior* they see us glorifying God.

**As Jesus was explaining to the multitude and disciples what a transition this would be for those who not only believe but also chose to follow, they realized just how hard and difficult such *behavior* would be. As Jesus spoke, the disciples watch as many who had gathered were turning and walking away; so one disciple asked: *Who then can be saved?***

Jesus said: "*But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*" This *road that leads to life* in Satan's world is narrow and the gate is small – there's no wonder *only a few find it*. Matthew 7:14. Jesus has told us of the road wherein the journey is of our lifetime. Please, ponder carefully these words of our Lord Jesus Christ, if so *few find it*, there must be - there has to be – much more to salvation than a 'one-time for all times' prayer of conversion; **salvation demands obedient behavior**, only then can you remain upon this road.

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\_\_\_\_\_ *JFI*:

Regarding a "*few*" in I Peter 3:20 we read: "*...when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved...*"

Peter reflects back on the days of Noah and is clearly referencing just how small a number of people *few* may represent as it relates to salvation. Both Jesus and Peter are using the word *few* in relationship to people that are **saved!** The number "8" represented the *few*. Now, whether Peter is being literal or figurative, it certainly should get your attention.

**An article in the Bible Science Newsletter, May 1980 stated that it was not unreasonable to estimate that during this time an average family would have six children and an average generation be one hundred years. Based on these figures at the time of the flood there would have been as many as 235 million people on earth.** "Bible Science Newsletter", Volume 18, No. 5, May 1980, "Five Minutes with the Bible and Science", page 1.

**Henry Morris estimates possible figures of 1,030 million people. (Or just over a billion) The Genesis Flood, John C. Whitcomb, Jr. and Henry M. Morris, Baker Book House, 1961, page 26.**

What is the percentage of 8 people to 200 million or 1 billion? Do the math!  $8/200m = 0.00000016$  x 7 billion people on earth today = 1,120 people equate to a *few*. The math on 1

billion people to 7 billion today: 7x8=56 equate to a *few*. - The "**FEW**" represents a very small number; and this should send a sense of urgency through your veins like nothing before ever has!

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## **Exposing the Truth about Self Denial**

One of Satan's playbooks: "**The Naked Communist**" by Cleon Skousen, goal #27 "**Infiltrate** the churches and **replace** revealed religion with "social" religion, **Discredit** the Bible" 1958

### **TRUE SELF DENIAL HAS BEEN DISCREDITED AND REPLACED!**

Despite all the warnings to not be deceived, the Christian church nonetheless ignores the true message of salvation. They have ignored the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ: "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" Mark 8:34. The consequences today – self-denial does not exist in Christian conversions.

It seems, when life got tough, it took but a nudge from Satan for the Church to disregard the meaning. Christ's words have not changed, nor been nullified; rather, they are ignored. Many of Christendom believe that to deny ones self is an outdated Puritanical practice. They have opted for a more comfortable, self-gratifying attitude from secularism: the well-balanced self-esteem.

The following comes from a secular expert on self-esteem, who writes from a worldly minded perspective on **the dangers of self-denial**. And as a non-Christian, that's certainly his right. But note as you read: This is precisely how Christian's today live, just as he describes and today's professing Christians haven't an iota of guilt about it.

*"...there is nothing innately good about keeping yourself in poverty (holy or otherwise). You aren't a better person for doing without things you truly enjoy, like a fine home, beautiful furnishings, comfortable clothes, and excellent health. There's no evil in those things, and you deserve to have all of those that you desire, as long as that desire springs from a healthy, well balanced self esteem." - Charles Burke*

It's quite the nudge! **Does that not sound like Satan tempting Eve?** (Genesis 3:1-6) Self-esteem is a favorable opinion of ones self focused on self-centered respect. Let this penetrate your mind; realize that self esteem can only be accomplished by a self centered **thought**. It cannot, in no way - glorify God. **You can not glorify God while self respecting yourself!**

*"...saith the Lord...are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts..."* Isaiah 55:8. Jesus said: "*Take no thought for your life...*" Matthew 6:25

So you ask what then the definition of self denial is as Jesus Christ intended the message to be. To answer that, let's refer to an 1842 lecture from Professor Charles G Finney, a man God has used to preserve the integrity of Jesus Christ's meaning of "**deny himself**".

**Professor Charles G. Finney:** *The denying of self is not for the sake of a greater good to self, but for the sake of doing 'good' to others. This is really denying self. Self-denial is a real sacrifice of self-interest. It implies if God's glory is so preferred to our own happiness or*

convenience, that we deny ourselves for the sake of glorifying Him, it proves that our love to Him is supreme.

Self-denial also implies the joyful giving up of what we need, or what might contribute to our comfort, for the purpose of doing a greater good to others. It says; **let no man think that he follows Christ, until he has renounced himself.** It is the giving up of our own interest as the object of pursuit, and devoting ourselves to the glory of God, any thing short of this but confirms selfishness.

Note on selfishness: Selfishness is entirely inconsistent with self-denial. They are exactly opposite states of mind, and can no more co-exist than light and darkness can co-exist. This mistake is very extensively made in the Church; and I do not hesitate to say, that in just as far as it is made, it is a fundamental error. It is putting darkness for light, and sin for holiness; and I must confess, it is extremely difficult for me to understand how a mind that has ever truly exercised self-denial, could fall into so strange a mistake--how a man who has ever known what it was to deny himself, from disinterested benevolence, should ever afterwards suppose that self-denial implied selfishness--and that to deny one form of selfishness for the sake of gratifying another form could be self-denial.

To deny self from motives of disinterested (unbiased) benevolence is for the time being to obey God. It is to do your duty. In other words, it is to be in a state of entire conformity to the will of God. (Therefore you cannot be in conformity to the world.) Nothing short of this is denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ. The fact that so few persons know what self-denial is, by their own experience, shows how few there are who exercise self-denial.

It is not sufficient then to practice occasional self-denial. Self must be set aside and crucified, and denied daily and continually. Your happiness must consist in disinterested endeavors to make others happy, or you never can be saved.

I beg of you to understand this. Denying yourself daily, taking up your cross daily, and following Christ daily, are indispensable conditions of salvation. And the doing of this daily is as indispensable as doing it at all.

Observe, Christ does not say, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself occasionally; take up the cross occasionally; and occasionally, in seasons of special excitement and revival follow me; but the doing of these things daily is here expressly made an indispensable **condition of salvation.**

Let me impress this upon you, for it seems generally to be understood, that if persons go so far as now and then to practice what they call self-denial--now and then to take up some cross, and occasionally, in seasons of special revival, follow Christ--that these are the conditions of salvation, and about as much as can be expected of Christians in this world. **Now mark, this common opinion is a fatal error.**

**The unalterable condition of salvation** is, that these things shall be **done daily**--that this shall be the state of the mind, and the habitual course of life--that self-interest shall be rejected as the grand end of life--**that self shall be daily denied,** and that **daily you shall bear the cross and follow Christ.** – Professor Charles G. Finney

The majority of Christian's today having no sense of urgency; ignorant, they do not understand the consequences. You are not saved if you have never denied yourself! And the church has

failed miserably in preaching this message. Simply put, self gratifying behavior is not an act of glorifying God, it requires putting self before God and one can not be saved that puts them self before God.

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*“Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”* Matt. 5:16

## **The Self Denial Transition Takes Your Life into a New Way of Living**

True Christian believers acknowledge that Jesus revoked the “old” way of life: *“I come to do thy will O God. He taketh away the first, [Jewish life before Christ] that He may establish the second...”* [Christian life after Christ] *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way...”* Hebrews 10:9, 19, 20.

**Having boldness to enter into a new and living way!** As Christians, we are different, our walk is a new way of life and living; it is a life that no longer conforms to this world. We boldly show the world we have become submissive and obedient Christian saints for Christ and we do so by our behavior. Let’s note here: Most often, the word “works” is referring to “behavior”. Your “works” are shown through your “behavior”. What ever you do in life as a job, a means to survive, it’s your “behavior” toward others while doing it that is your witness as a true Christian.

If we are to sincerely be **followers** of Jesus, we should thoroughly understand this meaning of the salvation conversion. The Bible emphasizes the seriousness of these commands to first **deny self**, and then **take up your cross** “before” we can truly **follow** and does so with these two stories:

(Matthew 19:16-21) The young rich man asked *“Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I might have eternal life?”* – In verse 21, Jesus said: *“...One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at the saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”*

Only **after** he **denies himself** is he expected to come and **take up his cross** and **follow** Jesus. (Jesus could see that his heart was full of covetousness and the young man **needed** to let it go.)

Let’s look at this once again from Mark 8:34 *“...Whosoever will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow me.”* Above, Matthew has described the **self denial** process as *“...go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor...”* Verse 21 is a definition of the young mans sin - “coveting”. To overcome he needed to **deny himself**.

The second story - In Acts 5:1-8; the story of Ananias and Sapphira is about a married couple that held back from the sale of their possessions and when they **lied** about it to Peter **they both dropped dead**. Why?

If you read back in Acts 4:32 they included themselves with the multitude: *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own...”* They had already agreed **to surrender everything** and the consequence of their deceptive disobedience was death!

Ananias and Sapphira failed to obediently demonstrate their faith by their behavior. Like the young man, they too were unable to **overcome** their coveting. **In both stories, they would not let go of things of the world!** Unlike the young man, Ananias and Sapphira both dropped dead!

Paul too confirms this urgency for change in Romans 12, by begging us to walk away from conformity. He knows it's futile to try and walk a spiritual path with worldly-mindedness.

Romans 12:1, 2: ***"I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye ... be not conformed to this world..."***

This is **past tense**; he acknowledges we are already **in** conformity; we're **conformed to this world!** Why so important? The world belongs to Satan! It's his world. Remember reading Matthew 4? Jesus was fasting in the wilderness when Satan took him to the highest peak – whose world was it? Satan said: ***"All these things will I give thee..."*** 'All these' things – meant: 'every' thing in the world belonged to Satan, it was his world and folks, **it still is!**

Jesus has said more than once: ***"I am not of this world"*** (John 8:23; 17:14 & 16) and Paul, in his way, is repeating Jesus in Romans 12; just as Jesus told the young man who was still **conformed to this world** to surrender his past lifestyle, possessions and then follow Him! Paul is telling us we must walk away from the conformity already in our life! Most importantly we must also understand, in doing so **publically** show's God and all the spiritual world that we are saved and the spiritual world sees it in our 'new' behavior.

Jesus and Paul have taught us that **"All"** Christians would suffer (***take up his cross***). This 'suffering' in your life includes the enacting of the separation from the world; from being worldly-minded and minding of earthly things, to a life of trust and obedience to God.

As Christians we must know - You cannot hide your inner thoughts from God; and if your surrender is not 100% complete, there is no salvation, the heart and mind has not been regenerated to enable the Holy Spirit to be within. As with Ananias and Sapphira, **their 'behavior' proved their incomplete commitment.**

You must make a total commitment (100%) to surrender and be in submission to Jesus Christ in order to be saved. Consider this true account from Kurt Koch's book *Demonology Past and Present*:

During the exorcism of a man named Pat, who they all knew to be a Christian, a demonic spirit was asked; ***"In the name of the Lord Jesus, tell us why have you possessed Pat?"*** One of **fifty demonic spirits** within him replied: ***"Because he did not surrender his life completely."*** **Our surrender must be 100% complete!** Even demonic spirits know the truth! (James 2:19)

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***"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."*** Philippians 2:5 NIV

Your **attitude** is seen and heard by the people of the world through your behavior. Paul further adds: ***"...become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe..."*** Philippians 2:15. To **shine like stars** is the result of obedient behavior that is seen by all.

Is obedient behavior hard to do? Again, the words of our Lord Jesus: *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will will my Father honour.”* John 12:25, 26

Note: I think we can all agree to hate life is not an enjoyable experience and here again we have a pre-requisite to *“follow me”* as Jesus says: *“If any man serve me, let him follow me”* These are commands, not suggestions that we as true Christians aspire for a Christ-like walk that is selflessly seeking an unbiased benevolence each and every hour of each day. This is what will become the essence of our works and from what we will be judged. So...

### **How Should A Christian Live Their Lives Separated from the World?**

For the past 2 millenniums the gospel message had to be one that made sense to the masses of people around the world. Not all of us can be preachers, teachers or missionaries but we can all behave in a manner that glorifies God. In the days of Paul the Thessalonians were concerned about living out their life without having to suffer death from persecution. If separated from the world, how should they be living?

In I Thessalonians 4:11, 12; Paul tells them specifically how to live their lives where by their behavior glorifies God’s Will by winning the respect of outsiders.

*“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”* NIV

*Make it your ambition to:*

**Lead a quiet life.** *(Be in daily self-denial; to be full of humility, selflessness and compassion.)*

**Mind your own business.** *(Not participating in or seeking to change Satan’s world.)*

**Win the respect of non-Christians.** *(Not conformed and, doing all with Godly behavior.)*

**Be living your life independent of anybody.** *(No debts, government aid or the likes!)*

*“... for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* I Thessalonians 5:18

Professing Christian’s must know when all is said and done they will all be judged based on the things written in the Book of Life, Revelation 20:12. And what is the essence of our life that will be judged? It says men will be judged *“...according to their works”*. (Behavior)

3 John 5 *“My dear friend, you are acting faithfully in all your behavior towards the brethren, even when they are strangers to you.”* their works (**behavior**) would be the **proof whether their faith were true or false** as their behavior demonstrates their true faith.

I Peter 1:3-9 *“In this (our faith) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith...may be proven genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

When is Jesus revealed? Judgment day! Verse 9 puts it all together, *“for you are receiving the goal of your faith* (behaving accordingly, having denied self, achieves this goal and leads

to) *the salvation of your souls.*” Therefore, **faith exclusively could be no rule in such a procedure.**

Again, it is our behavior that is seen and through our behavior we ***glorify God.*** Nothing we do in this world should mean more than striving to glorify God in all we do. If we truly are seeking to be like Jesus then we should always be in awareness of his example; think on these words of our Lord and ask yourself was anything more important than glorifying God?

John 11:4 *“This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”*

John 12:23 and 28: *“The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified...Father glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*

John 13:31, 32: *“Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.”*

John 14:13: *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*

Note: In John 14:13, as well as in John 15:7 & 8, that what we ask for - must glorify God.

John 15:7, 8: *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*

John 17:1, 4, 5, 10: *“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee...I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was...And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”*

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**The purpose of this essay is to challenge whom ever is reading it!** Test the scriptures! Re-examine what you’ve heard and not heard in today’s church. Absent is the doctrine of ***denying self.*** Without a correct understanding of self-denial, the true meaning of salvation is horribly skewed wherein ignorance lies over our desire to constantly be seeking to glorify God.

Another example of behavior is given to us in James 2. Here, the biblical term ***works*** is in references to our ***faith.*** But note that it can be interchangeable with the word ***behavior.*** Read the scripture below, the word ***behavior*** can simply replace the word ***works*** and still maintain the integrity to the precise meaning.

*“Even so faith, if it hath not works (no appropriate behavior), is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

*Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But will thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

*Was Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* (Does this now make more sense?)

*Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*

*For as the body is dead without the spirit, so faith is without works is dead also.”*

James 2:17-26

This is a very sound interpretation. It reveals to us an insight that glorifying God is derived from a heart seen when **acting faithfully in all behavior**. It is an unbiased benevolence toward other Christian's as well as strangers in an unsaved world. It allows us all, teacher and student, servant and master, to willingly walk “...*so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders...*” (I Thessalonians 4:12a) only then are all things as they truly are and at times end, Jesus will pass judgment justly **according to our works** (our behavior).

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**For the past several centuries** Christianity has fought an enemy that has used lies and half-truths in order to subject its will upon the unsuspecting “*many*” within the Christian Church. The purpose of this enemy is to gain for itself supremacy over the ultimate fate of those souls. This is a subtle attack, within the church, on the renewing of the mind, which prevents true knowledge of how to obtain real salvation.

This attack comes from an army of demonic anti-Christ spirits that have successfully invaded the Christian church. Through their influence, certain behavioral acts given to glorify God have been **changed** resulting in their dismissal as outdated and no longer applicable.

This is a powerful and deadly enemy and the weapon it fears most is the true unchanging words of God. “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...*” Hebrew 4:12. This weapon of Christianity has vanished from the church! A *strong delusion* has come upon the Christian church, wherein; it is no longer armed and totally unaware!

**Changing** the meaning of The Word is not and never has been an option: “*In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God.*” John 1:1; “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*” Heb. 13:8; “*...and his (Jesus) name is called The Word of God.*” Revelation 19:13b. By definition the Word as God, remains the same forever!

Understanding 'self-denial' was essential to establish, as it remains paramount to salvation. From true salvation comes true discernment from God. It is from a state of humility, which comes from self-denial, and then we can better understand God's Word.

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*“Pride goeth before destruction...Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, then to divide the spoil with the proud.”*

*“Everyone that is proud is an abomination to the Lord.”*

*Proverbs 16: 18,19 & 5*