

Assurance of Salvation  
Part 67

Self-Denial

&

Sovereignty and Encouragement  
(for the genuine followers of Jesus)

**DISCLAIMER** (AS WE FINISH THIS TOPIC OF "SELF-DENIAL")

- **This "Mission Moment" is for "Disciples" – followers of Jesus.**  
(Others can listen in, if they wish.)
- **Theme:** God's sovereignty can be an *encouragement* for the people of God.
  - It is the *only* reason we can pursue "self-denial."
  - It is the *only* reason we can have assurance of salvation.

When we become followers of Jesus, we quickly realize that...

- **We are WEAK and SMALL.**
  - Compared to God's strength and greatness.
  - Compared to the way we ought to be.
- **God is WORKING in us.**
  - Empowering us.
  - To get us where we should be!

**Result: There is GROWTH!**

GROWTH... **It's GUARANTEED !!**

**God's sovereignty and Human responsibility WORKING TOGETHER:**

- They **GUARANTEE** that **self-denial will be present** (in increasing measure) in the life of *every* genuine follower of Jesus.
- They even guarantee that this guarantee is guaranteed! (etc.)

Sometimes all we can see is our worn-out feebleness.

Don't give up! Strength is coming!

I CAN'T GO ON.

He gives strength to the weary, ...  
Isaiah 40:29a (NAS)

Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;...  
Isaiah 40:30 (NIV)

...but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.  
Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

We can rest (and grow stronger) in God's promises



- **When we fail**, we can look to Scripture for encouragement and guidance. **Then, we can get up and start again.**

God began our salvation... and he will finish it! **GUARANTEED!**

... being confident of this, that *he who began a good work in you* will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philip. 1:6 (NIV)

... Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, ...

Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)

He will *enable* our growth, so we can fulfill our *obligation* to grow!

**OBLIGATION:** But *grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18a (NET)

**ENABLED:** [Jesus Christ] the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, *grows as God causes it to grow.*

Col. 2:19 (NIV)

God will increase our *power* and our *willingness* to grow.

... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for *it is God who works in you* to **will** and to **act** according to his good purpose.

Philip. 2:12b-13 (NIV)

... the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

1 John 4:4b (NET)

**YES!! Power from God!!**

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a *spirit of power*, of love and of self-discipline.

2 Tim. 1:7 (NIV)

But we need to remember our *dependency* on him.

I can do all things *through him who strengthens me.*

Philip. 4:13 (ESV)

**YOUR JOB: Focus on the "human responsibility" part of GROWING**

- **Willingly do** what is necessary to make spiritual growth happen.
  - **GROW** in your *understanding* of Scripture, so that you can discern truth from error.
  - **PRAY** for a *willingness to submit* to Scripture, so that it will change your values and actions.

## Remember that self-denial is every person's DUTY.

- Self-denial is a **DUTY** (moral obligation) for all people, whether saved or not.
- Only with the Spirit of God in us, can it become our **DESIRE**.
  - When the desire and the actions are both present, it is evidence of salvation.

## Don't be surprised when people oppose it!

- **THE WORLD WILL TELL US:**
  - We deserve lasting happiness and fulfillment; we deserve to be pampered.
- **THE WORLD LIES TO US!**
  - It can't give what it promises.
  - We don't deserve these things anyway, because each of us has rebelled against God, the source of all life, peace and happiness.

## Don't pretend it will be easy!

(You must rely on GOD's power.)

- **ABILITY?** You CAN'T do it,\* **unless** the power of God is in you.
- **DESIRE?** You won't WANT to do it,\* **unless** the power of God is in you.

\*(the genuine type of "self-denial")

- It **WON'T** always be **easy** and **fun**.
- But it **WILL** always be **worth the effort!**

## If you think it's going to be easy

- You're going to be disillusioned.

But they said it would be **FUN...**

- Our spirit desires self-denial, but our flesh hates it.



## It wasn't easy for Jesus, either.

They said it would be **FUN...**

Jesus never promised us a starry-eyed journey.



Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Luke 9:23 (NET)

Will you listen to Jesus or to "them"?

... but I said something quite different.



## So prepare for the battle

- As in everything good, the "flesh" (sinful nature) will resist.
  - It will wage a constant fight against growth in Christ.
  - You may hate the struggle, but will be willing to fight back.

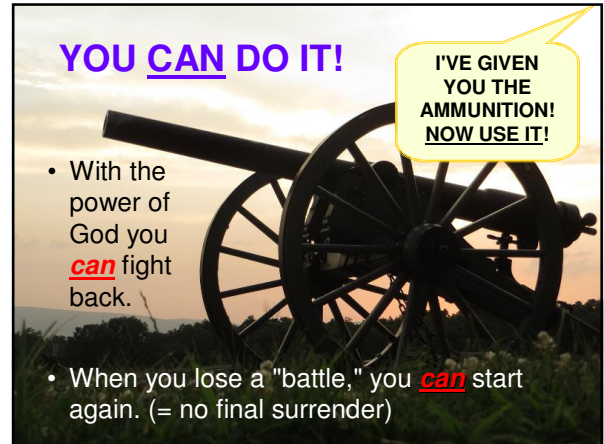
**REALIZE THAT THIS IS WAR!**



## YOU CAN DO IT!

I'VE GIVEN YOU THE AMMUNITION! NOW USE IT!

- With the power of God you can fight back.
- When you lose a "battle," you can start again. (= no final surrender)



## Pay attention to the Spirit's prompting

- Genuine followers of Jesus want self-denial!
  - ★ – It's one of the desires that the Spirit of God puts in you, when you begin to follow Jesus! ★
- A follower of Jesus would not be comfortable with any other perspective!
  - WHY? Because self-denial is part of the definition – what it means to "follow" Jesus!

## It's the FAKES who won't succeed!

- **They may make excuses.**
  - "It isn't needed!" OR "It's a lofty, unattainable goal (so it's a waste of time to try)."
- **They may admit the need & still not do it.**
  - "I know I should do it, but..."
- **They may oppose it.**
  - "Jesus wants you to feel good about yourself."

## It's the FAKES who won't succeed!

- **Whatever their excuse or claim...**
  - They just won't do those things that are a part of "following Jesus."
  - Instead, their way of life will be characterized by following the impulses of the flesh (Those impulses may involve opposing self-denial, or counterfeiting it).

## YOUR MISSION #1

- **PRAY FOR THE FAKES** – those who oppose self-denial and those who are counterfeits.
  - Maybe God will someday begin a work of grace in their hearts!

... in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ...

2 Tim. 2:25 (NIV)

## YOUR MISSION #2

### • ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER


– God never intended us to grow "alone." We are part of a community, a "body."

And in him you too are being ***built together*** to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephes. 2:22 (NIV)

## YOUR MISSION #3

### • REJOICE IN SOVEREIGNTY

– God is doing something for us that *we don't deserve!* 

– *He is saving us...* and his work in us is *proof* of our salvation!

"Salvation ***comes from the Lord.***"  
Jonah 2:9b (NIV)

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