

## Teaching for 1-9-08

### Death to the Church!

No, this is not an anti-Church sentiment! This comes from a very pro-Church desire that the Church of Jesus Christ become everything that Scripture says it should be. If you understand “death to the Church” correctly, you understand this as a very positive sentiment coming from a deep love for the Church.

Consider Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:31: ***I die daily***. Then examine closely his familiar words in Galatians 2:20: *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

These are not unfamiliar passages to most who name the name of Jesus Christ. But how many of us really embrace the concept of death as we walk out the challenges of life and ministry? In one of the many mysteries of God’s design, ***life comes from death!***

### Death to Self

The idea of death to self is one that has been lost for much of today’s Church, yet it is the pathway to victory. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself lived out this truth in His ministry on earth. Philippians 2:5-11 records this amazing paradox about the humility of Christ. *When Jesus made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant*, it wasn’t that he assumed a passive or powerless role—all the while bemoaning His position. Instead, it was that ***He gave up everything He had a right to—in order to be fully available for the purposes of the Father.***

He became obedient to those purposes, even if it meant death. As He spent time with His Father, communing with Him and listening intently, Jesus was obedient to what He saw and heard. He was so committed to “death to self” that He would at times extend His prayer throughout the night (Luke 6:12). It was His mission and passion to die to the purposes of His Father. Have we learned the secret of death to self?

### The Rich Young Ruler In All of Us

One of the saddest stories in the New Testament is that of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and was confronted with the cost of following Him. The ruler went away unwilling to pay the cost (Luke 18:18-23) because it meant death to self. In the same way, we must be willing to leave behind those things that are the most precious to us—regardless of the cost.

A.W. Tozer, in his book *Who Put Jesus on the Cross?* states it this way: *The individual must want the fullness of Christ with such desire that he will turn his back on whatever else matters in his life and walk straight to the arms of Jesus!*<sup>1</sup>

What are those things that you choose to cling to—instead of abandoning yourself into the arms of Jesus? Would it be the comfort of your home? What about the accolades and acclaim of others? Would it be health or family—or even the lofty goal of “building His Kingdom”? What would Jesus ask you to turn your back on this year in order to walk in greater intimacy with

Him?

We might consider these challenges and conclude that it is really the intention of our hearts that counts, and not so much the actual relinquishing of personal treasures. But perhaps there are truly some “riches” that we might need to give up to fully follow Jesus.

### **Dying to What?**

Often the most difficult areas to see clearly are the ones in our own lives. We try not to look too closely lest we discover something that needs to die. It’s possible that the Holy Spirit has already pointed out areas that need to die, yet you have not responded to His call. We must remain open to any moment that the Lord would say to us, “See that place there? I want you to die to that thing.” Our obedience is our moment of truth.

There are places deep in our hearts, emotions, and memories that the Lord calls us to put to death. Perhaps we received an offense at the hand of another. It may have happened long ago, but we continue to give that offense life by harboring and nurturing it. We want the offense to be rectified, not realizing that it is we who must die to it! A snub or a slight may hurt us—and we continue to hold on, wanting justice. Perhaps a private dream or ambition has never come to light, but we hold it in the secret chambers of our hearts, unwilling to let it go. We inevitably have disappointments with friends or family member that we can’t seem to get past. These things lie deep in our inner selves, waiting for freedom to come through death to self.

There are also those ministry or professional issues that we must die to. We are obsessed with goals and ambitions that we think we need to accomplish. We live in the false sense that we are the key to our own success. But we must come to the place of even dying to our callings and goals so that the Lord can take over and work those things through us. The calling may be valid and true, but too often we live with the belief that we must “work it out.” When we do, we miss the whole point of how Jesus lived His life. Jesus was constantly in communion and cooperation with His Father.

### **The Time for Death Is Now!**

Death to the Church means us! The time to die is now. We are living in critical days, and Jesus calls us to die *today!* For too long we have run the Church like a well-oiled machine—modeled after the ways of the world. But the world knows nothing of death. It only knows status, promotion, and success.

It is very likely that as you read this, the Lord has spoken to you about some area of your life where He is calling you to die. Today you must decide to *turn your back on whatever else matters in your life and walk straight to the arms of Jesus!* Would you be willing to do that every day that the Lord gives you breath? He awaits your answer.

*Lord, we ask You to help us learn to live with continuous death to self and the flesh. Show us those areas in our lives where we need to die. Please give us the power by Your Holy Spirit to die to everything You show us so that we can walk straight into the arms of Jesus. Amen.*

**1WHO PUT JESUS ON THE CROSS?** *And Other Messages on Christian Integrity.* A. W. Tozer, Compiled and Edited by Gerald B. Smith. Christian Publications, 1996.

