

5. Two ways to die

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Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 0 0] Well, now we come to the reading of Scripture. Let's turn in our Bibles to Luke's Gospel, chapter 9. Luke, chapter 9. And if you have one of our big church Bibles, you'll find this on page 867.

867. I'm going to read a short passage from verse 18 to verse 27. And here we have the incident where Jesus provokes the disciples to tell him who they think he is.

And Peter answers that he is the Christ. And then various things follow immediately upon that. So Luke, chapter 9, verse 18. Now it's happened that as Jesus was praying alone, the disciples were with him.

And he asked them, Who do the crowds say I am? And they answered, John the Baptist.

But others say, Elijah. And others, that one of the prophets of old has risen. Then he said to them, But who do you say that I am?

[1 : 1 7] And Peter answered, The Christ of God. And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

And he said to all, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever would save his life, will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake, will save it. For what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

For whoever is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him, will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he comes in his glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.

But I tell you truly, there are some standing here, who will not taste death, until they see, the kingdom of God. Amen.

[2 : 3 0] This is the word of the Lord, and may he bless it to us, this evening. Well friends, do let's turn up this passage again, please, from Luke chapter 9. Now if you've been here, over these last few Sunday evenings, you'll know that I've been trying to follow, the theme of storming the citadel.

The idea there is that by nature, in the center of every human life, there is a fortress, or a citadel, if you like, an ultimate place, of resolute independence.

A final refuge of self-government. And it's that that makes an individual, want to take charge, of his own or her own life. It makes us say, the flag that I fly on top of my battlements, shows that I'm in charge here, and I'm going to repel any marauders, who seek to take me over.

I'm the captain of my soul, and that's the way I want it to continue. However, when this self-reliant, self-sufficient, self-governing individual, is met, by the claims of Jesus Christ, a great tussle, takes place.

Christ claims, rightful ownership, of the citadel, the fortress within. He says, in effect, to the soul, it is wrong for you, to be in charge, of your own life, because you were made, to live in submission, to me, as your rightful king.

[4 : 10] Therefore, lay down the arms, of your rebellion, and surrender. Now friends, many of you, will know exactly, what I'm talking about, because, already you have surrendered.

In some cases, many cases, this has happened, a long time ago. Others here, may be in the midst, of that tussle, right at the moment. You're recognizing, that Christ is your true king, but you haven't yet, quite capitulated, to him.

The battle for your soul, is on. And there may be others, here as well, who are still determined, to be self-sufficient, and self-governing. But you're interested, in Christ.

That's why you're here, and you're drawn to him, and you're asking questions, about him. Now this passage, I want us to look at together, this evening, is a section, of Jesus' teaching, which describes, the transformation, that comes to a life, after the citadel, has been stormed.

It's a passage, about the character, about the way, of a real disciple. It shows, what the Christian life, looks like. It is immensely, challenging. But at the same time, it is gloriously, encouraging.

[5 : 23] Now the passage, I especially want, to focus on, is verses 23, to 27. But first, we need to see, what is happening, just beforehand, in verses 18, to 22.

Because verses 18, to 22, are a key passage, in the gospels, and they have, a direct bearing, on what Jesus, goes on to say, in verses 23, to 27. So in verse 18, Jesus asks his disciples, a provocative question.

Who do the crowds, say I am? And the disciples, answer by telling Jesus, what they're, what they're hearing, the people are saying. So they say to him, well some say, that you're John the Baptist.

John the Baptist, had been put to death, executed by King Herod, shortly before. So some say, you're John the Baptist, come back from the dead. Others say, that you're Elijah, the prophet of old.

Others, that you're, a resurrected form, of one of the other prophets, of long ago. So Jesus goes on, well that may be, what the crowds, are saying about me.

[6 : 26] But what about you? Who do you say, I am? And Simon Peter, in a moment of revelation, says, the Christ, of God.

He has understood, something, that the crowds, have not understood. Now let me say, a little bit about, the word Christ. The Jews, were a subject people.

They were a subjugated people. The Romans, ruled them with a heavy hand. And for many centuries, the Jews, had been waiting, for their Christ, or their Messiah, to come.

The word Christ, or Messiah, means the anointed one, the king. They'd been waiting. And the hope, they nourished in their hearts, was that when their Christ, finally came, he would restore Israel, to its proper position, of national independence.

So just as King David, a thousand years beforehand, had killed Goliath, and defeated the Philistines, and thrown off their yoke. So David's greater son, the Messiah of Israel, would do a similar thing, by defeating the Romans, and throwing them out.

[7 : 34] So the Messiah, that the Jews were expecting, was going to be, a military hero, a conqueror. But Jesus was not, that kind of Messiah. He overturned, everybody's expectations, because although he was indeed, the Messiah, and although he was indeed, a conqueror, the enemy, that he came to defeat, was not Rome, but the power of Satan, and death.

And he achieved his victory, not with sword and spear, but by dying on a cross, and rising again, immortal. But the Jews, in the first century, when Jesus was here on earth, had no expectation, of that kind of a Messiah.

They wanted a William Wallace, without the bad ending. But that was not, to be Jesus' way. He knew, that he had to tread, a much more difficult path.

A path of rejection, suffering, death, and then resurrection. And that's why he says, to Peter and the others, in verse 22, the son of man, must suffer many things, and be rejected, by the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day, be raised.

In other words, what he's saying is, I am the Christ, how right you are, Peter. But I'm not the kind of Christ, that you're expecting. And you've got to understand, and accept, that the path to victory, and life, is through suffering, and death.

[9 : 02] That's the path, that I must take. There is no other way. And then, in verse 23, he says to everybody, to all who are listening, and you all, if you are going to be my followers, you must prepare to take the same path, and to follow in the same pattern.

Now, what I'm wanting to point out this evening, is that the pattern of life, described by Jesus, in verses 23 to 27, which is the pattern, followed by Christians, is essentially, the same pattern of life, that Jesus describes for himself, in verse 22.

The situation is, like master, like servant. Jesus knew, that he must die, before he could gloriously, rise to eternal life. And he's teaching his followers, that if we are to be, true followers of his, we too, must follow, a difficult path, which will involve, hardship, suffering, and a kind of daily dying, before we shall enjoy, eternal life, in glory.

Now friends, I said a moment ago, that this message, of verses 23 to 27, is immensely challenging, but also, wonderfully encouraging. It is. So as you begin, to look at verse 23, if you're tempted, to flick the off switch, in your mind, as if to say, I don't really want, to listen to this, please don't.

Keep listening. Our lives depend, on whether we are prepared, to learn these lessons, from Jesus. If we want to be, real disciples of his, we need to get these verses, deep into our systems, and live by them.

[10 : 44] A so called Christianity, which avoids, what verses 23 to 27 are teaching, is no real Christianity. Now let me try to unpack, these verses, under three headings.

first, Jesus shows us, the essence, of real discipleship, the essence, of real discipleship, in verse 23.

Now this verse, perhaps more than, any other verse, in the four gospels, teaches us the heart, of Christian discipleship. So here it is, 23. If anyone, would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, daily, and follow me.

Now there it is, that is the heart, of the whole matter. So under this first heading, let's notice, the two main elements, involved here. The first is self-denial.

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself. Now our ears, and our hearts, are not well tuned, to the call, to deny ourselves.

[11 : 51] In fact, the call of Jesus, to self-denial, falls very strangely, on modern ears, in the western world. Because our society, and our culture, loudly proclaim, something entirely different, and contradictory.

Our society today, calls us, to assert ourselves, and to indulge ourselves, to pamper ourselves, to promote ourselves, to excuse ourselves, to cosset ourselves, to protect ourselves, to love ourselves, to gratify ourselves, and to fall in, with every whim, and suggestion, put forward, by the self.

In other words, the self, has become, the king. Our culture, calls to us, and says, what is it that you, yourself, really want to do? Listen to your heart.

Let your inner desires, teach you, the right way, for yourself. Now that's why I say, that this call to self-denial, falls so strangely, on our ears today. It wasn't so strange, a generation or two ago, because our culture, in those days, still bore, significant marks, of the influence, of the gospel.

But today's world, is a different world. You see, you may say, deny myself, deny myself, that is just so hard. Is Jesus asking me, to throw over, the habits of a lifetime?

[13 : 15] The answer is, yes he is. What then, is self-denial? It's something radical. It goes right, to the heart of a person. Jesus is not asking, his followers, to deny themselves, certain things.

We might think, if I were to deny myself, chocolate biscuits, during Lent, I might be practicing, self-denial. Or if I deny myself, luxury marmalade, and go back, to golden shred, I might be practicing, self-denial.

No, it's not that. What Jesus, is asking us to do, is not to deny ourselves, certain things, like luxury foods, but to deny, the self, the very principle, of putting the self, first, and bowing, to its demands.

The self, is that insistent, part of me, that wants, to rule my own life. I cannot welcome, its demands, and bow to them, while also following, Jesus, as my king.

I cannot have, two kings, King Jesus, and King self. They are incompatible. Either I go the way, of self-gratification, or I go the way, of seeking to please, King Jesus.

[14 : 26] But I cannot take, both roads, at the same time. To serve self, is really to worship, self. I heard just the other day, about a 19 year old girl, apparently a very pretty, attractive, 19 year old girl, who was brought, to the brink of despair, even suicide almost, because, as she perceived herself, her body, was not quite, the right shape.

She'd come to worship, a certain image, of herself. And because, what she saw in the mirror, didn't quite tally, with the ideal, in her own mind, she was falling apart.

She was in despair. Now self-worship, won't always take, that form. It'll take many forms, but self-worship, will ruin us in the end. And therefore, it is a blessing, that the Lord Jesus, calls us, to deny, ourselves.

Then the second element, in verse 23, is that Jesus calls us, to take up the cross, daily, and thus, to follow him. Now what does Jesus, mean by that?

Well let me quote, just briefly, from John's gospel. This is from chapter 19, just before the crucifixion, of Jesus. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called, Golgotha, where they crucified him.

[15 : 50] Now that was the Roman custom. A criminal, who was condemned, to death by crucifixion, would be forced, to pick up the cross beam, of the cross. Not the whole thing, but the cross beam.

And he had to carry, the cross beam, before it carried him. He couldn't carry, both the cross beam, and the main upright beam. That would be too heavy, for anybody. But he was made, to carry the smaller, of the two beams, to the place, generally outside the city, where the crosses, were planted.

Now just think, of the position in life, of a man, who is carrying, his own cross beam. It is the last thing, that he will ever do.

He's saying, goodbye to the world. He will never again, enjoy a meal, with his friends. He will never again, embrace his wife, or hug his children.

Everything, is behind him. He has set his back, towards everything, that he has known. He is preparing, to die. Now what does this mean, then, for the disciple, of Jesus?

[16 : 55] Well it may mean, in situations, of extreme persecution, that a Christian, may literally, have to lay down, his life, rather than, disown Christ. Now we're not facing, that kind of persecution, in this country, at the moment.

But many of our, brothers and sisters, are facing, that kind of choice, in other countries, in the Middle East, in parts of Africa, especially, at the hands, of Muslim extremists.

Just a few weeks ago, about a month ago, I was taking, a group of our, Cornhill students, for a practice, sermon class, one afternoon. And we were, we weren't looking, at this passage, but something rather similar, about persecution.

And I asked this group, of Cornhill students, if they had ever, imagined themselves, facing fierce persecution, and what they would do, if they were captured, and their captors, gave them the choice, of either renouncing Christ, or facing death.

I said, have you imagined, that kind of scenario, and yourself being put, under that kind of pressure? Now some of them said, that they had never, imagined themselves, in that situation. I was really, quite surprised.

[18 : 03] I would have thought, that all of us, need to play that scene, over in our minds, again and again. So as to be prepared. Who knows, what is going to happen, in the 21st century?

More Christians, were martyred, for their faith, in the course, of the 20th century, than in all the previous, 19 centuries, put together. And the 21st century, is proving, just as hostile, to the Christian faith.

Now most of us, I'm aware, will not be called upon, to die physically, for our allegiance, to Jesus. But what he's asking us, to do here, in verse 23, is to lay down, our lives, in principle, for him.

So that we worship, and serve, and love, him, rather than, worshiping, and serving, and loving, ourselves. And let's notice, that important little word, daily.

Take up the cross, daily. In other words, taking up this cross beam, and preparing to die, that's a decision, that needs to be reaffirmed, daily.

[19 : 08] Why daily? Because our hearts, are so fickle, and so quickly, turn back, to the worship, of ourselves. It is so easy, to be a two timer. That's why, every day, perhaps in the early, part of the day, we can say to the Lord Jesus, today, Lord, I want again, to turn my back, upon the claims, of self interest, so that I can be your disciple, and love what you love, and value, what you value.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was a fine German, Christian pastor, and he was one of a, a small number, of Christian leaders, in Germany, in the 1930s, and 1940s, who really understood, well, the violent, and murderous, aims of Adolf Hitler, and the Nazis.

He was one of the few, German Christians, who was prepared, to stand out, against the Nazis. Well, he was followed, he was tailed, he was known about, and eventually, they arrested him, and he spent his last, 18 months or so, in various, concentration camps, and they executed him, in April, 1945, just three weeks, before Hitler, killed himself, and the war, was brought to an end.

And Dietrich Bonhoeffer, wrote these words, when Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. That's what verse 23, is all about.

So there's the first thing, the essence of real discipleship, in verse 23, self-denial, taking up the cross, every day. Now secondly, Jesus shows us, the motivation, for discipleship, of this kind, in verses 24, and 25.

[20 : 55] And this is where, such encouragement, comes in. You see, a person could easily, read verse 23, and say, this is awful, this is unbearable, following Christ, sounds impossibly hard.

How can anybody, live their lives, denying themselves, and dying every day? It goes against human nature. Well, indeed it does go against human nature. The Bible goes against, so many of our natural inclinations.

But in verses 24, and 25, Jesus gloriously shows us, why, the lifestyle, of verse 23, is the only way to live. Verses 24, and 25, bring us the encouragement, the incentive, that we need, so as to live in the style, of verse 23.

So let's look at verse 24 first. Jesus says, for whoever would save his life, will lose it. But whoever loses his life, for my sake, will save it.

In the first half of that verse, Jesus is describing the person, who refuses to become a Christian. His aim in life, is to save his life. To practice lifelong self-preservation, and self-protection.

[22 : 08] So a man like this says, my aim in life, is to bend all my energies, to the promotion of my wealth, and my comfort, and my well-being. I shall live for myself, make myself as strong as I can.

So for example, I shall attend to my finances. I shall get the best qualifications I can, so that I can secure, the most lucrative job that I can. I shall beat, the global economic downturn, by being very canny.

My mentors, will be Richard Branson, Warren Buffett, and Fred Goodwin. I may not make quite as much money, as they've managed to make, but I'll make sure of my pheasant, and claret, when the rest of the world, is on baked beans, and dry bread.

I shall be rich. Secondly, I shall attend to my health, very carefully. While I'm young, I shall join the best gym locally. I shall develop my biceps, my triceps, and my six-pack.

I don't know what that is, by the way. Somebody tell me afterwards. I'll cycle. I'll jog. I'll admire my torso, in the mirror, every morning. And then, when I'm too old, for all that sort of thing, I'll have frequent health checks.

[23 : 14] Blood pressure, heart, lungs, blood tests, to pick up early signs of cancer. I'll play golf. I'll buy a fashionable pair, of swimming trunks. And I'll swim up, and down the baths, for 30 lengths, twice a week, grunting, in a manly fashion, as I go.

And I shall look forward, to my friends, saying to me, how fit and well you look, for a man of your age. And then thirdly, I shall attend carefully, to the aesthetic, and intellectual aspects, of my life.

I'll develop my reading, so that I can talk, sparkingly, about ideas, and current affairs, and politics. I'll become something, of an expert, in music, and drama, and cookery. I'll travel widely, so that I can discuss, culture, and religion.

And finally, in the autumn, of my life, as the shadows lengthen, I shall be able, to look back, with a sense, of great satisfaction, that I've been able, to make the most, of myself, and of my opportunities, that I've been able, to fulfill, my potential.

Now look, at Jesus's words. Whoever, would save, his life, that is, protect it, and preserve it, and shore it up, will lose it.

[24 : 26] In the end, there will be nothing there, because the self, is no fit object, for our worship. It was never, God's intention, that we should spend, our lives, serving ourselves, and being consumed, with self-regard, and self-satisfaction.

So let's look, at the second half, of verse 24. But, whoever loses, his life, for my sake, that's for Jesus's sake, will save it.

Now that phrase, that second half, of verse 24, is surely, explaining verse 23. To lose one's life, is a vivid way, of describing, self-denial, and daily, taking up the cross.

To lose our lives, means, to sit loose, to sit light, to all those concerns, about self-protection, and self-fulfillment. And how do we do that?

Well, the verse, tells us, we lose our lives, for Jesus's, sake, for my sake, it's all for his, sake. Where serving him, and pleasing him, become our main aim, we find that our concern, for self-protection, and self-fulfillment, begins to shrivel up.

[25 : 42] Why? Because our new master, the Lord Jesus, is a master, worthy, of our love, and service. Whereas the old master, the self, is shown up, for being the shoddy, little idol, that it always was.

When our eyes, begin to be open, to the majesty, and beauty, of the Lord Jesus, who wants to turn back, to the shabby idol, of self-service? For my sake.

That's the key phrase, there in verse 24. Jesus is not asking us, to lose our lives, just to be tough, or stoical, or manly, or so that we should say, what a strong, well-disciplined fellow I am.

No, it's not for that purpose, it's for him. It's for his sake. We renounce self-concern, and self-preservation, so that we can start living for him. So that we can enlist, for the glorious work, of loving, and serving him, and broadcasting, the good news, about him.

And that is the romance, of being a Christian. For my sake, for his sake, that's the most romantic phrase, in the world. You know the kind of love song, where the young man, sings to his sweetheart, and tells her that, he'll do anything for her.

[26 : 54] I'll do anything for you. She means the world to him. He adores her blessed little cotton socks, and the very carpet she stands upon. He'll do anything for her sake. Now when the citadel, of the human heart, is stormed, that heart is overcome, by the force, of an enormous love.

The love of Jesus for us. He's not some tyrant, like a Hitler, or a Gaddafi, who wants to beat us, into submission. Not at all. In the end, we submit gladly, because he's loved us, to the point of laying down his life, to save us.

Now you'll see that verse 24, expresses an apparent, a great apparent contradiction, which lies right at the heart, of the gospel. You would think, that the person, who sets out, to save his life, would be the one, who saves it.

And yet he doesn't. And you would think, that the person, who sets out to lose his life, would lose it in the end. But instead, this wonderful principle, operates, that when we become willing, to lose our lives, for Jesus' sake, we find that our lives, are saved.

Yes, in this life, but even more so, in the world to come, which is what Jesus, is really talking about, in verse 24. So don't you think, verse 24 is a great incentive, to us to be willing, to lose our lives, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, daily.

[28 : 22] And verse 25, let's look onto that. This is one of the greatest questions, ever put to the world. And it reinforces, verse 24. Jesus asks us, in verse 25, for what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

The answer is, it profits him nothing. It would be a wretched bargain, to gain the whole world, if in doing so, one loses eternal life. Now in verse 25, Jesus is picturing a possibility, which is so extreme, as to be really absurd.

The possibility, that one individual, might gain possession, and control, of the whole world. Nobody's ever done that. Nobody's ever got near, to gaining the whole world. Alexander the Great, had a crack at it.

And a few other people, have made determined efforts, not to gain the whole world, but perhaps even to, to dominate, biggish chunks of it. But Jesus' point is, that once we come to see things, more clearly, we realize that, nothing in this world, has any value, when compared to the joy, of living eternal life, with the Lord.

Just think of the diversity, and beauty, and loveliness, of the whole world. The Himalayas, the Rocky Mountains. Think of the oceans, teeming with life.

[29 : 45] Think of the fertile farms, and fields, and gardens, and forests. Think of the beautiful architecture, of the great cities, of the world. Rome, Florence, Venice, Prague, St. Petersburg, Glasgow.

And think of the beauty, of human life, and human art. Think of the great, orchestras, and art galleries, and theater companies. And the sporting prowess, the great cricketers, and tennis players.

Think of the universities, and the centers of research, and learning. The study, the appreciation, of what is true. Think of the work, of physicists, and chemists, and the medical researchers, with their great discoveries.

Jesus is saying, that if an individual, were to gain possession, and control, of all these things, at the cost, of their eternal life, what profit, would it be?

Jesus came to earth, to die for us, so that we should be able, to enjoy his eternal company, in heaven. He forces, that great question, of verse 25, on the ears of the world, because he loves us so much, it grieves him, to think that any of us, should give ourselves, to trying to possess this world, or even a little tiny part of it.

[31 : 00] He knows that if we do that, he will lose us, and we shall lose him. Well third and last, let's look finally, at verse 26, where Jesus shows us, how real discipleship, is demonstrated.

Verse 26, for whoever, is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him, will the son of man, be ashamed, when he comes in his glory, and the glory of the father, and of the holy angels.

Now you'll see, that this verse, introduces a new idea, the thought, perhaps a surprising thought, that somebody might be ashamed, of Jesus, or his words.

Now the Lord, I know it's a new idea, but the Lord, is still taking us, in just the same direction. He's still talking, about what it means, to deny self, and take up the cross, and become indifferent, to the claims, of this world.

In verse 26, he is saying, that a true follower, of his, will not be ashamed, of him, and not be ashamed, of his words, which as far, as we're concerned, means the Bible.

[32 : 09] Now if we ask, why should anybody, be ashamed, to belong, to the finest man ever, to the son of God himself? Well the reason is, that the non-Christian world, at best is baffled, by Christianity, but very often, holds Christians, in considerable contempt.

And therefore, it's easy for us, to be tempted, to be ashamed of him, and not to want to own, in public, that we belong to him. Imagine for example, that you're a school teacher, and you arrive, as a new staff member, at a school, and you're a Christian.

And during your very first week, in the staff room at school, one day you're having, mid-morning coffee, and a senior member, of the staff, much older than you, comes up to you and says, I understand that you're a Christian, is that right?

Well, at this school, we have a strong tradition, in teaching pupils, to enslave their minds, to no master. I hope you won't try, to brainwash, these fine young minds, with your outdated traditions.

Now, how do you respond, to that kind of an attack? Verse 26, shows you, don't be ashamed, of your master, who in any case, has not enslaved you, but has liberated you.

[33 : 23] Stand up for his honour, and for the honour of the Bible, every part of it. We're all going to be attacked, like that from time to time. A couple of years ago, I was on a train, from Aberdeen to Glasgow.

And a man got on the train, at Dundee, and sat down opposite me. First Scotrail, you know those little tables, with the grey tops. So I was here, and he was just sitting opposite me. And we got talking. He was a man about my age, and he proved to be a professor, from Glasgow University.

And we had an interesting discussion, about his work, and so on, for about 10 or 15 minutes. And he looked across the table, and he said to me, what do you do? So I said, I run a course, that trains people, to be Bible preachers, and Bible teachers.

Now he was a polite man. He had good manners. He'd obviously been properly brought up. But despite that, he could not prevent, a look of contempt, from crossing his face.

And he said to me, why on earth, would you want to do a thing like that? Implication, hasn't the world moved on somewhat, since those days? Why should a man, spend his energies, on something so obscure, and irrelevant, as teaching the Bible?

[34 : 40] That's the kind, that wasn't persecution. It was mild. But it's the kind of attitude, that comes to us, isn't it? So verse 26, raises two questions for us. First, are we going to be ashamed, of Jesus, and his words, when we are suddenly, put under pressure?

But secondly, and more importantly, might Jesus, have to be ashamed, of us, when he returns, in his glory? He will be ashamed, to own us then, if we are ashamed, to own him, now.

That is the force, of verse 26. I'd like to end, with a word, to the younger people, here, in the congregation. I'm thinking of those, under 30, or thereabouts.

Will you accept, this call, this summons, from Jesus, to be a real disciple? Our poor old, broken down world, needs a new generation, of men and women, who are prepared, to be all out, for the Lord Jesus.

This is an immensely, challenging call, to deny self, where everyone else, is saying, pamper yourself. It's immensely, challenging, to pick up, the cross beam, day after day, and to set your back, to the empty, and pitiful values, of the non-Christian world.

[35 : 59] In Bonhoeffer's words, Christ bids you, come and die. And you may think, but it's too costly. I can't afford, to pay, such a steep price.

But can you afford, not to pay it? Do you really want, to end up, losing your life, losing heaven, losing the Lord Jesus, losing everything?

The one who is determined, to buttress, and protect his own life, is the one, who will lose his life, in the end. There are two ways, to die. And we have to choose, one of them.

Either we will die, to the claims of Christ, and live for ourselves. Or we will die, to the claims of self, and live for Christ. You younger ones, you may have 40, or 50 years, of active life, in front of you.

How are you going, to spend your strength? Will you let the Lord, take over, and rule, the citadel, of your life? Or will you keep him, out of it in the end, because you are determined, to please yourself?

[37 : 02] The purpose, of a human life, is to be ruled by him, for his glory, and honor. That is what, we were made for. If anyone, would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, daily, and follow me.

For whoever, would save his life, will lose it. But whoever, loses his life, for my sake, will save it.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, how we thank you, that you have been prepared, to lose your life, for our sake.

And we know, that you ask us, to lose ours for your sake, following in the same pattern. We thank you again, therefore, so much, that you were prepared, to accept your, destiny, that you would be rejected, and killed, and yet gloriously, on the third day, raised up.

And we thank you, for beckoning us, and calling us, to follow the same pattern. Yes, indeed, to lay down our lives, but in the end, to be raised, to be with you, in glory.

[38 : 18] Give us the grace, gladly, to accept this call, we pray. And we ask it, to the honor and glory, of your great name. Amen.