

32. Surrender that leads to life

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People in general want to do whatever they want to do according to their own schedule. And they expect that everything should go according to their wishes. If they don't, many of them might start to have hissy-fit. I am finding out that we've been practicing this from day one. Let me rephrase that; it actually is in our DNA.

How do I know? When my grandson Micah is hungry, he cries as if he has not been fed for days. By looking at him, you wouldn't think that he had skipped any meals. When he has a dirty diaper, he cries as if it is the end of the world. When he wants to be held, he cries. He knows that the sucker grandpa with a capital letter 'S' will come take care of his needs. Yes, he already wraps me around his little pinkie.

Since the desire of trying to get everything our way is in our sinful DNA from the conception of our lives, the idea of surrendering our lives to the Lord Jesus is an absolute foreign concept to all of us and it is not something any human is happy to do even if it would be beneficial to us in the future.

That is exactly what Christ teaches us. He tells us to surrender our lives to Him so that we may have eternal life in Him. It is no wonder why so many people would not come to Christ, because it requires a simple unconditional surrender to Him and they don't want to do that.

Unconditional surrender means a surrender without conditions from the ones who give up the fight. That means that there shouldn't be anything withheld by us. How can He expect us to do that? Does He know what we have to give up? Yes, He does know. First, He made an example with His earthly life for us to follow. Second, what do we actually have to give up? The eternal destination to Hell, a hopeless life without Jesus, and much more. Wow, what terrible things to miss!!!

A. WHERE I GO YOU CANNOT COME

John 8:21-22 Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." 22 So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?"

Previously Jesus already mentioned about His departure to these Jewish religious rulers. Once again, He warned them that He would leave them, but they would not be able to follow Him, and they would die in their sins. They were wasting their God-given opportunities by arguing with Him instead of trusting Him; one day those opportunities would end.

How many unbelievers waste their precious time and effort to deny the gracious invitation of God for their eternal life? How many carnal believers refuse to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ because what He teaches to them in the Bible stands against their carnal living? Total submission to the Lord does not include the sentence that starts with "But I want..." What we really want should be what He wants in our lives.

In v22, here is another insult from the Jewish rulers against Jesus. In Jewish teaching, the lowest levels of Hades were for those who committed suicide. Now, the Pharisees try to twist Jesus' words to imply that He will commit suicide and therefore be damned.

B. ANOTHER "I AM"

John 8:23-24 And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Since all sin must be dealt with, those who die in their sins without Jesus in their hearts will have to pay for their sins in hell. But if we have our sins dealt with now, on this side of death, by trusting in whom Jesus is and what He did to save us, we can avoid dying in our sins, because we receive His grace which is God's unmerited favor for the undeserving that is us.

Jesus claimed that He belonged to a totally different world from the Jewish religious rulers. He had come from the presence of God, and He explained to them that only by faith could they attain the access to heaven through Him.

An insurmountable barrier separated them – unbelief. The attitude of unbelief is not simply unwillingness to accept a statement of fact; it is resistance to the revelation and truth of God in Christ. Not only did they repudiate His claims, they completely rejected Him as a person. Their unbelief would only lead them to eternal damnation in hell as it happens to any other unbeliever.

2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Thomas Paine, very influential as an intellectual and an atheist in early America, wrote many books, especially his most famous one, "The Age of Reason". When he died, he said, "I would give world if I had them that The Age of Reason had not been published. Oh, Lord, help me. Christ, help me. Oh, God, what have I done to suffer so much? But there is no God. If there should be, what will become of me hereafter? Stay with me for God's sake. Send even a child to stay with me for it is hell to be alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I have been that one."

John Newton who wrote Amazing Grace was a slave trader turned believer. He died at the age of 82, the last months of his life were spent confined to a single room. Among his last words were: "I am like a person going on a journey in a stagecoach who expects its arrival every hour and is frequently looking out the window for it. I am packed and sealed and ready for the post."

Last Saturday morning, I was outside of our home. I noticed that three vehicles pulled into our street. Right away, I could tell they were a group of Jehovah's Witnesses who would go around our neighborhood area to evangelize their false doctrines. As I was going back into the house, I was expecting them to knock on my door pretty soon because one of their cars parked directly in front of my home. I also noticed that the lead car made a quick u-turn and came back to the car in front of my home and they were discussing something. The knock never came.

I think that my home was marked by them not to visit. Because when they came last time, they had a brief theological lesson in Greek which proved to them why their bible "The New World Translation" is incorrect and what they believe is a heresy.

Just like the Jehovah's Witness and the Mormon people sincerely believe their wrong doctrines, the ancient Jewish rulers sincerely believed their religious tradition over the Word of God and did not seek the truth of God.

In v24, again Jesus claimed to be "God Himself". Many of you may know someone who said, "Jesus had never claimed to be God." Obviously, that person does not know anything about the Word of God. Jesus claimed in many places in the Bible. V24 is one of them.

John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Did you notice the italicized word 'He' in this verse? What does it mean? It means that this word 'He' is not in the original Greek manuscript, but it was added by the translators for our understanding. So if you take out 'He', what do you see? It reads:

John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that 'I am', you will die in your sins."

When I taught Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter 4 to you guys, I mentioned this. But for the sake of those who skipped the church service for whatever reasons, let's go over again.

John 4:26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

When Moses found the burning bush in the wilderness, he received an assignment from the Lord to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses was not wild about that idea, because he was quite content with his mundane boring shepherd job by now. So he came up with one lame excuse after another to bail out on God. His effort was futile against the One who covered all of his escape routes. So Moses finally gave in and asked the Lord for His name.

Exodus 3:13-14 Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

That is it. One of God's many names is "I am," not 'I was.' nor 'I will be'. In Greek, it is "ego eimi." God's 'I am' shows that He is above our time limit. Here we find Jesus using this very name again as the Lord God used when He answered Moses' question and the Jewish rulers understood what He meant.

C. WHO ARE YOU?

John 8:25 Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.

This question of the Pharisees obviously came from a combination of willful confusion and contempt.

It seems incredible and ridiculous that these religious "experts" should ask Jesus, "Who are You?" The Lord had given them every evidence that He is the Son of God, yet they had deliberately rejected every one of them. Our Lord's reply can be expressed, "I am exactly what I said!" In other words, "Why should I teach you new things, or give you new proof, when you have not honestly considered the witnesses and evidences I have already given?"

D. I SPEAK WHAT THE FATHER SPOKE

John 8:26-27 I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him." 27 They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

Jesus emphasizes the point again, that His words are from God the Father. So, if the Pharisees have a hard time with Jesus, they really have a hard time with God the Father.

At the same time Jesus shows us His complete submissiveness to the Father here as well as v28 and 29. After all, Jesus is God Himself, but He only spoke what He heard from the Father, nothing else.

To explain this better, I asked an expert in blind guide dog training – our own C.J. Daniel. He told me several interesting points that I can draw parallel lines with our relationship with the Lord.

To train a good guide dog, trainers look for a dog which wants to please his master. You can train a disobedient one, but it takes much more effort and time. The Lord, in His infinite wisdom and all-knowing foreknowledge, knows who wants to be saved and to please the Father in heaven.

During the extensive guide dog training, a guide dog candidate has to face many temptations and obstacles to overcome – like chasing a cat, smelling everything and getting distracted by other people or things, etc. Overcoming these things is against dog's nature.

During our walk with Jesus Christ, a believer of Jesus Christ must face many temptations and obstacles to overcome. I don't need to explain this one, because we all face them everyday. Our carnal desires want them, but the Holy Spirit who lives in us helps us stay on course with God's righteous as long as we are willing to obey His command.

Some dogs cannot complete the guide dog program because they could not overcome their nature.

Some Christians cannot complete their walk with Christ because they backslide to their own sinful nature.

Even a dog which has completed his guide dog training course, he has to go through daily obedience training so that he stays attentive and focus on his master's commands.

Even a Christian who has been walking with the Lord for sometime, he has to go through daily obedience training through His Word, the Bible and prayers to be attentive to our God's commands.

E. WHEN YOU LIFT UP THE SON OF MAN

John 8:28-30 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." 30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

Now Jesus spoke about His own death, when He would be "lifted up" on the cross. The word translated "lifted up" has a dual meaning: "lifted up in crucifixion," and "lifted up in exaltation and glorification." Jesus often combined the two, because He saw His crucifixion in terms of glory and not just suffering.

John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

In Acts chapter 2, we find 3000 people came to the Lord Jesus through the preaching of apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost.

Jesus never became God, nor did Jesus ever cease to be God. His deity – which means His divine Lordship, the fact that He was God – was pre-human, pre-earthly, pre-Bethlehem, pre-Mary, and pre-Creation. He was God before He was born, and He remained God after He became a man.

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus was completely submissive to the Father so that we can follow His example. Submission to God means following His commands. Many believers claim that they are submissive to God. But in reality, they are only submissive to Him in the areas they like, but not in the area where they want their ways. Guess what? We don't pick and choose. Either you are submissive to Him in every area of your life, or you aren't, no exception.

F. CHALLENGE

Are you submissive to His commands in your marriage? In raising your children? In your finances? In the area of loving and forgiving others? In the area of honesty?