



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – March 20, 2011

Heart to Heart...

It is a difficult concept from the Lord in which to place your faith. It is extremely difficult for people to accept. It is one of the easiest concepts to discuss in Bible classes! You hear people who allow their families or friends to interfere with their faith, their worship and love for the Lord. We are speaking about *self-denial*!

Isn't self-denial the very fabric Jesus built His life around? Isn't self-denial the secret of walking with the Lord? ***"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his own cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it."*** (Matthew 16:24-25) If we desire to walk with Jesus (and I pray we all desire that) it begins by self-denial! It is the complete surrender of our lives, both heart and mind, into the hands of Jesus. It means there are things we won't do, places we refuse to go and lives that say 'no' to us and 'yes' to Him. We deny our wishes and wants for His name's sake. This is not unusual or new but a fact in walking with Jesus.

When Jesus taught: ***"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."*** (Matthew 6:33), *"seek first"* is to deny self! To *"seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"* means our choices are built around Him and pleasing Him. Christ becomes the principle upon which our behavioral patterns are built. To pursue the will of God comes only through self-denial.

Jesus said when people will deny themselves; it is the gaining of their life. It is the expansion of life, not narrowing it. When we look at denying ourselves, we think we are giving up and narrowing our choices while the opposite is true. Life comes through surrender! When we try to work everything out, control situations and the refusal to deny ourselves, we will lose our own personal lives eternally.

When a young lady or man denies themselves of immorality it keeps their lives from dishonor. When we deny ourselves from participating in drinking parties/gatherings we keep our lives pure and will never regret of a shameful practice that might otherwise be openly displayed. To deny ourselves from listening to gossip might turn some away from you but will bring many friends to your life because of trust. To deny personal pleasure over the worship with the saints in remembering the death of Jesus will bring a depth of faith that might not have been touched otherwise.

When this life is over and we meet our Lord face to face, we will be glad we lived a self-surrendered, self-denial life. We will never regret one choice made in denying us! Self-denial takes us into life and that life will take us to eternity. If we don't deny ourselves, taking up our cross and following our Lord and His desires, our lives will be nothing more than the lost souls we see every day around us. Think about it!!!

Brent