

The Doctrine of Self

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Matthew 16:24-27

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works."

The doctrine of self. You've probably never heard it. You won't find it in a systematic theology book, but there is a biblical doctrine of self. The Scriptures teach in composite about self. There is much to say about it in the Scriptures. Tonight we want to condense from this text all that we can and then visit others in order to understand what this self is. Who is self, what is self, and how shall we do what Jesus said here and deny one's self in order to follow Him?

Long before Jesus uttered those words, Solomon said,

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

The wise man of the Old Testament said if you could control yourself you're much better than a strategizing general that can conquer a city. You're far greater than the mightiest of men, if you can keep yourself slow to anger. Did you know that self-control has a lot to do with your future and your successes?

In the late 1960s an experiment was done at the Bing Nursery School located at Stanford University, using children age four to six as subjects. The children were led into a room, empty of distractions, where a treat of their choice (Oreo cookie, marshmallow, or pretzel stick) was placed on a table, by a chair. The children could eat the marshmallow, the researchers said, but if they waited for 15 minutes without giving in to the temptation of eating the cookie or marshmallow, they would be rewarded with a second marshmallow. Testers observed as some would "cover their eyes with their hands or turn around so that they can't see the tray, others start kicking the desk, or tug on their pigtails, or stroke the marshmallow as if it were a tiny stuffed animal", while others would simply eat the marshmallow as soon as the researchers left.

It was discovered that only a third of the children could wait the 15 minutes and have delayed gratification.

All of the children tested were followed through their schooling careers and 20 years later it was discovered that the one-third who waited the 15 minutes tested better, did better in school and were more successful than the kids who couldn't wait and devoured the cookie.

There is something to be said about teaching our children delayed gratification instead of instant gratification. The denial of self goes a long way, even helping you to think as well as to live.

I. Self is a Problem

You didn't need me to tell you that. I've often said my worst enemy isn't the devil it's myself. Listen to what Jesus said in our text,

"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself . . ."

You could just say, "let him deny self." Jesus recognizes that self is the first obstacle that has to be dealt with if you're going to be His disciple. Then the Apostle Paul comes along and says the problem of self is the problem of sin and the flesh. In other words, Paul defines living according to self is to live under the influence of the flesh, which is to live under sin. If you live according to you, you are living according to your flesh, which is under the domination of sin. Self and flesh are not the same thing, although they are often wrongly defined as equal. You, yourself, are not flesh, but self has flesh. The kind of self Jesus is telling us to deny is the self under the dominion of sin and the flesh. It is to live by the mind and appetites of the flesh and if you do that you have a huge problem. And there is no greater explanation of the problems of living according to the flesh than in Romans 8 where the Apostle contrasts a life lived according to the Holy Spirit with life according to the flesh. Paul characterizes the Christian life as life in and by the Spirit and he characterized the unbeliever's life as in and by the flesh.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." (Romans 8:5)

There is no third road. There is no middle option. You are either led by the Holy Spirit and think in accordance to His thoughts and will and agenda, or you're thinking in accordance to your mind and reasoning, which is heavily influenced and dictated by the appetites of these mortal bodies. Paul says these are the two choices. For those who have been saved, you have been delivered from the dominion of sin. Sin should not be ruling over you, God has broken its power so that you do not have to sin and live by its dictates. You can now live by the Spirit, which indwells your spirit.

Moving down a few verses in Romans 8, Paul makes this a little more frightening.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. ¹³ For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Romans 8:12-13)

Paul would have a broken heart if he were to see American evangelical churches in this 21st century. If he were here he would see many members and many pastors—placating, appeasing, compromising with their flesh, all the while trying to live the Christian life, which is a virtual impossibility. The two cannot co-exist. If you are not aggressively opposing the flesh, the dictates of your mind, and the appetites of your body, you will perish. You will not die and go to heaven you will die and go to hell. But if you are aggressively, actively, and continually fighting the thoughts of the flesh and its attitudes and notions, then you will live. In the words of John Owen: “be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

It is a daily struggle and fight with the remaining corruption within us and that corruption is within *self*. Hence, self is our problem. It is that which is tempted and enticed by the enemy. The enemy doesn't tempt you with things self isn't interested in, no; Satan always tempts you according to your own desires. This is what the Apostle James tells us. When we are tempted, we are tempted according to our own desires which were already within us—in self—because within self resides this flesh. Self is a problem. However, Jesus gives us good news.

II. Self is Savable

You are savable.

“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:25-26)

A. What is Self?

To define self is an incredible task. In preparation for this message I consulted philosophers, I read books on the subject of self, I scoured my library to read all I could find in my books where self is outlined, and do you know what I discovered? Everybody said it was a difficult thing to define. Let me attempt it tonight. I think it's quite simple.

Self is you; you are self.

That's it. It's pretty simple. Sometimes education can get in your way.

Somebody catches you talking when no one else is around and asks, “Who are you talking to?”

“Oh, I was just talking to myself.”

You were talking to *you*. Self is not an imaginary person that walks with you. It's not the imaginary friend you can excuse your mistakes and mischievous behavior on. Children will often do this. When in trouble and your parents asked you why you did wrong, did you say, “Oh, it wasn't my fault, it was _____” and you named your imaginary friend? That's not what self is. That's delusory. Self is not a delusion, it's really you.

It is the self-awareness and self-consciousness that leads to self-identity. Self-identity is how you see yourself. Self is who you are as a being, as a person with personality.

Some would say my definition is too limited because what about the person who is in a vegetative state or in a coma, who has no self-awareness, a person in a coma is in a temporary state of unconsciousness? That happens to all of us when we go to sleep every night and self does not stop existing. There is more to self than self-consciousness and self-awareness because as soon as that person comes out of a coma they would be aware that they are a person, not a dog. They would be aware of their surroundings although it might be quite foggy and they might not be fully alert. Even in that state, they're cognizant of themselves. That is self. Whether asleep or awake, self exists because you exist.

What philosophers or theologians fail to explain, Jesus is able to say it so well.

Jesus defined self:

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny **himself**, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (Matthew 16:24)*

In verse 25 He says it again, although He uses a different word:

*“For whoever desires to save his **life** will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:25)*

To deny yourself is the same thing as losing your life now in order to gain it in the eternal ages to come, but if you try to save self or save life now you'll lose self, or life, in eternity. Jesus defines self as your life. So what is self? It's you. It's your life.

He goes one step further in the next verse by using a different synonym,

*“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own **soul**? Or what will a man give in exchange for his **soul**?” (Matthew 16:26)*

Here Jesus doesn't use the word *life* or *self* but the word *soul*. Whether it's soul, life, or self, it's the same thing. Now, I hope, you have a better idea of what self is. It's you, and your life and your soul, your personhood. It's you. Quite clearly, it's who you are as a person with personality.

B. Self is to be Saved.

The very thing you jealously guard with self-preservation, self-control, self-pleasure, all the hyphenated “self-sins” as A.W. Tozer called them, God says is a part of who you are by virtue of being born. There isn't a one of us who hasn't struggled with those self-sins. The good news that Jesus gives is that self is savable. He can save you from those self-hyphenated sins.

It is not wrong to want to save your life. The reward for losing your life is you will save your life.

*“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, **but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**”*

It's not wrong to want to save your life. In fact, it's quite spiritual to want to save you. It's godly to desire to save yourself and preserve yourself through the eternal ages. It's not unbiblical. Though you may have been taught or trained that to save self is the very essence of sin, it's not according to Jesus. You're supposed to save yourself and Jesus is telling you how you can do it. Why would He tell you how to do it and the necessity of doing it if it wasn't important to do it? Jesus would not mislead us like this.

Self does need to be preserved. Self does need to be saved because you need to be saved. You need to be preserved.

It is wise to want to save your life.

Not only is it not wrong, Jesus says it's wise. Why does He say that? Because He says the soul is infinitely valuable.

“... Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

There is nothing as valuable as a human soul. If you attained all the wealth of the world it would not come close to the value that God places on your soul. The wealth of this present age is going to have to be turned loose of the very moment you breathe your last and close your eyes in death. You never take it with you. The soul goes on forever. Wealth doesn't last.

How many people lost their wealth in 2008 when the stock market tumbled and the housing market bubble burst? How many people? How many of you lost significant portions of your 401ks and IRAs? I saw significant reduction in the little bit I have and it's just now got back to where it was.

In contrast, there is no way you can replace your soul. Your personhood, your being goes on forever and ever and ever. Ten million years after you have died here you'll still be much alive and cognizant of your surroundings. That's why self outlives this body. After 10 million years, imagine it, you're still going to be somewhere! You're going to be in a location and you're going to be cognizant of either eternal bliss, comfort, and joys unspeakable or you're going to be cognizant and suffering under the most terrible agonies that human lips cannot explain—it defies explanation.

Jesus is saying that if you're wise you will place an extremely high value on your soul and you will see nothing coming close in value. You must be willing to forsake even the things of this earth, because they are not worth your soul. They are not worth you.

How many of you have ever had a child get their first car and they wrecked it? We had that experience. Karen and I had got Shelby a pickup truck. He was driving home from school and had his brother with him and we believe Shelby fell asleep when he ran into a tree. The scar is still there on an old cedar tree. He totaled the truck and Joseph didn't want to ride with him ever again. Do you know what Karen and I felt? Anger? Rage? No. We felt most blessed that we had our boys. Trucks you can replace. Children you can't. A human life, a soul, the person, can never be replaced. You are wise, Jesus says, if you're willing to see this great fact of life and it is this: there is nothing in this world that will ever compare with how valuable you are to the One who made you.

By all means, would you see for yourself today that you ought to be valuable to you? You ought to be valuable to you.

The pleasures of the world are not infinitely valuable.

"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

Self is savable and it is right that we save it. That's what Jesus is saying here.

III. SELF MUST BE SUBMISSIVE TO GOD'S WILL

Jesus is saying that you must not rule you but you must bring yourself under the blessed will of God. If you do that you, yourself, will be rewarded.

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matthew 16:27)

What are the works? Denying yourself, delaying gratification, not trading your soul for the pleasures of this life and world, and waiting for the joys God has for us in eternity. Jesus is saying you must bring yourself into submission of God's will. Here is where we have problems theologically that need to be addressed. I assure you that every one of us has struggled with this thing called self and trying to understand it biblically. Part of the problem is that there has been wrong terminology used by pastors, preachers, and theologians over the years.

I. Wrong Terminology.

a. Die to self.

How many of you have heard that you have to die to self? I've said it a few times too. What I mean by that is this submission to God's will, that's what Jesus means. But self doesn't need to be put to death. The Bible does not use this terminology.

b. Crucify self.

Again, the Bible does not use this terminology. Nowhere in the Bible does it say you are to kill yourself or crucify yourself or to bring death to self. That is wrong terminology. Why does the Bible not use that kind of terminology? Because when people begin to say those things all different sorts of crazy things start happening. People start trying to do this and do that and if they can deny their appetites and flesh and act really, really holy, then they'll be saved. Remember I told you a few weeks ago how one guy thought if he could climb a pole he would be holy? He lived on that pole for years thinking that's what Jesus meant to deny himself. So you have all of these strange, monastic, legalistic measures being taken and the Bible doesn't say that's what is required.

2. The Right Terminology.

a. Self-Denial.

Deny yourself of self-trust.

You don't trust yourself anymore. For those of you who haven't lived as long as some of us here tonight, just take my word for it, the longer you live the more you discover that you're not trustworthy. You discover you're not as good as you think you are or as smart as you think you are or as powerful as you think you are. You are never what you think you are.

Jesus says if you're going to follow Him you have to stop trusting you, thinking that you really know what to do. The Christian struggles with this because we can be tempted to think that we know what to do spiritually. We can think we've learned what to do because we've been trained and have had victories now and again, but Jesus says you can't trust you.

Deny yourself of living for worldly pleasures

"²⁶For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul."

To deny yourself is to stop trusting you and stop living for now. Quit living for the cookie or the marshmallow. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Don't live for instant gratification. There are many things we want and want now. In fact, some people will show their impatience by saying "I wanted it *yesterday*." Self-denial means to say "no" to yourself because you cannot trust you. You can only trust God for what's right and what's wrong. Think about it, the whole temptation was about how to discern between what's good and what's evil and Satan in essence said to Eve, "You don't need God for that, you can do that. Just eat of the fruit of this tree and that fruit will help you to be able to do that and from now on you'll never have to listen to what God says is right and wrong for your life. You can decide that." We still believe that lie.

Jesus said if we're going to follow Him we have to stop trusting yourself and stop living for now. If you're not living for your self-pleasures and trusting yourself, you must be actively trusting somebody and that Somebody must be Jesus.

Self-denial is submission of self to Someone else

²⁴ *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”*

The opposite of submission to self is submission to someone else, in this case, to Jesus. Jesus is the One that knows exactly what you and I need. It's so freeing, so wonderful, to be able to say to the Lord, *My life is a blank check. Here, You write in the amount, You do with me whatever You want.* It is absolutely freeing to trust God with everything, the good, the bad, and the ugly. If you really trust God, it doesn't matter how difficult it is, you're able to say, “Lord, I know You're in charge and You're doing this for my good and somehow, someday it is going to help me, therefore I trust You. Praise You.” It becomes a source of joy even amid tribulation because you know that God can be trusted with you.

Another biblical term regarding self-denial is,

b. Self-control.

That seems to be a contradiction, does it not, that the Bible would define self-denial as self-control? It does. One of the nine fruits of the Spirit, the very last one, is self-control.

*“gentleness, **self-control**. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:23)*

Please listen. It is a mirage, a rouse, an illusion, to believe you can control yourself apart from the Holy Spirit. The last issue to fall before a person becomes a Christian is an issue of who is going to be in control. That's the last issue to fall.

The struggle is, “If I follow Jesus, He said I have to deny myself, which means I have to lose control and give Him control.” But the truth is you are not in control if you're not a Christian. You've never been in control. That is the illusive delusion that Satan casts over your mind to make you believe that you are a person that is in charge of you and it's false. It's a lie. It is not ever true.

The Bible says you are a slave to the mastery of sin and a child of Satan, according to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2 and you do as he bids. You are under the god of this world. In fact, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 says the god of this world has so blinded your eyes that you can't see the truth. Which means you can't see the truth of the Gospel or the truth about you, therefore you believe the illusion, the mirage that you're in control, when in fact you're not in control. The only person that has ever been in control of his or her self is the Spirit-led person.

You are never more in control of yourself than when the Holy Spirit comes at conversion and you submit yourself to His leadership. God does not come like demonic powers and possess people and make them do things they would never imagine themselves doing. You don't become some puppet on a string where God is the puppeteer and you dance at His will and whim. No.

The Holy Spirit works in cooperation with you and your *self* has to trust Him in order to work in cooperation with Him. When you do that, it is you who has self-control. You have the ability to not to give into temptation. That's what self-control is. When anger begins to rage, when someone mistreats you and does not recognize your worth as you think everybody ought to, the Spirit of God can help you to suppress that anger and actually have pity for that person. When you're tempted to lust and look with wrong desires upon somebody, the Holy Spirit—and only Him—can help you to grab that desire and bring it into the captivity of Christ and regain your mind so you think on things that are pure and not impure.

You can't do that without God. No sir, you will never be able to do that without God. When the desire for things or the pleasures of this life come and you're tempted by them, only by the power of the Holy Spirit can you say, "No, I am my own man, I am my own woman, I don't have to do what the rest of the crowd does. I can walk in my own way because I march by a different drumbeat—it's the drumbeat of the Holy Spirit who lives within me," and you can exercise self-control. That's what Jesus means to deny yourself. You actually come under true self-control.

IV. HOW TO TAKE SELF AND SUBMIT TO CHRIST

Remember What God Promised.

If we want to start learning to live in this kind of way, we have to remember that Christ has promised us something. The Apostle Paul states in his epistle to the Ephesians that Christ's covenant with His bride, the Christian, is to "sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26-27). And again, Paul shares the commitment of God for full sanctification to Thessalonians, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

The promise has been made to every Christian tonight that God is going to save you to the uttermost. He's not going to do a halfway job with you. He's going to keep working in you until one day when you stand before Him He's going to look at the Son and He's going to look at the you and then back at the Son and then back at you and say, "Two peas in a pod. I can't tell them apart, they are so conformed to one another in the way they look, act, and think." You're going to be conformed to the image of Christ. That's God's promise to you.

I say this is the first thing you need to remember and here is why: I was taught that I had to do the work of sanctification. I was taught that if I didn't sanctify myself, if I didn't really grapple with myself and make myself holy, I would lose out with God. Of course after being saved God showed me that doctrine wasn't the truth, but there were still certain men of God I really respected who taught that there was this experience you have with God where He sanctifies you perfectly and you never sin again. I wish that were so! But it isn't. However, God has promised to start that pro-

cess of sanctification at the moment of conversion and He's not going to turn you loose or give any reprieves. He will be working continuously in you because He's made a covenant and commitment to you. The only One who has made that commitment is *Him*. He didn't say, "You and I together will clean you up." He didn't say, "You and I will get self straightened out." He said, "I will do this." The bride is the one who receives the washing of the water by the Bridegroom. "Faithful is He who calls you who will also do it," and hereby we see the distinguishing characteristics between those who profess to be saved but are not and those who are you see a supernatural work going on in their lives. Sometimes they rebel against it, they don't live perfect lives, but God will never fail them, even in their rebellion.

The work of chastisement is part of the work of sanctification. Remember this is God's work. Why is that so important to remember? Because you can trust God to do what you cannot do.

Based on God's Grace We Can Humble Ourselves.

This act of trust in God is not a passive waiting for some crisis experience that leaves you completely humble, not that the Lord can't do that—the ways of God are past finding out—but the clear Scriptural teaching is that you and I are to be engaged in the fight of sanctification. Therefore I am to humble myself.

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. (Romans 12:16)

Be humble. We are supposed to do that.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)

So it is *me* who is to take *myself* and humble *me*, trusting God's grace will help me. But I am to do that. This is important because there are preachers and teachers, whom I greatly respect, who believe that there is a crisis experience that comes in after salvation, almost like getting saved again, where God comes and works so mightily in you that your sanctification is almost completed. Some call it the Baptism of the Spirit. Some call it entire sanctification, and some just call it a crisis where you learn to trust God completely. They say things like, "Let go and let God," and from that moment on you abide in Jesus and there is no struggle, only perfect peace and perfect rest. Again, I believe men have had those kinds of experiences. It was crisis, it was a struggle of faith, and finally they broke into them where they fully surrendered and God did amazing things. But that's not the rule, that's the exception. The rule of Scripture says that you and I are to do the work of humbling ourselves, trusting the grace of God to help us do it. You and I are the ones who, through the Spirit, are to put to death the deeds of this body of self. You and I are to fight in cooperation with the grace of God against our sins. Remember what we said earlier, if you're not killing your sins your sins are killing you.

It is not Scriptural teaching to wait and have some experience with God where He makes you humble and so from that point you live a super Christian life.

The Influence of the Holy Spirit.

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Romans 8:13)

It's not you fighting your sin by yourself, but God giving you the power by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)

The struggle of the Christian life is the new self, which is not totally new, striving against the depraved self, which is not totally depraved. In other words, the Spirit vs. the flesh. The Christian is a new creation. He is no longer totally depraved—thoroughly corrupted in every part—he is new, but not totally new. Herein is the struggle, the not totally depraved—the flesh—struggles with the not totally new person—the new heart and spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” (Galatians 5:17-18)

So what is the answer? I give myself to the influence of the Holy Spirit and He helps me to overcome this depraved—but not totally—self that still remains.

Remember the Gains Self Can Have If Self is Denied Now.

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.” (Matthew 16:27)

There is a very similar text found in John's gospel.

“He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (John 12:25)

Remember, it is wise to save yourself. It's wise to look out for self. Here Jesus says that if you are willing to submit yourself to Christ in this life and not live according to your own plans and agendas and especially not for the world, then you'll save your life. If you're going to deny yourself and live the Christian life you need to remember another that if you delay the gratification that comes in this life through the pleasures of this world, no matter what it might be, for the gratification that will come when Jesus Christ comes for us, you will save yourself.

Jesus doesn't mean you hate you, He says you are learning to discipline yourself now and delay the gratification, say "no" to the cookie in front of you knowing that one day He is going to give you so much more *if you just wait*. I need to remind myself that I may be giving up satisfaction now but the gain is eternal sanctification and that is—well, I can't describe it.

Anyone who is not willing to make that transaction will appear to be so foolish then. Remember the gains that you can have if self is denied right now. Our greatest example is Jesus. That's exactly what Jesus did. He denied Himself the glory that He had in heaven with the Father. He didn't need to come to this earth. He didn't need to die for us. He didn't need you. He didn't need me. But He denied Himself and became one of us. He became a part of His creation, the Artist became the art, and that was an act of self-denial and delayed gratification. It wasn't just an act of delayed gratification, He didn't just come and spend His 33 years and dodge the bullet by putting in His time and saying, "OK, Father, I've lived 33 years, now it's time to go back and get what You promised." No, He endured hostilities that required the greatest degree of self-control and in doing that, what did He gain? Well, He gained you and me.

He valued your soul. He valued you and said, "I'm willing to deny Myself in order to gain My kinsman."

In the Spirit of our Lord, let us go from this place, denying the right to trust in ourselves, denying ourselves the pleasures of this life, only taking that which we know God has permitted to us, denying ourselves of everything except trusting Him and submitting to the Holy Spirit and His influence, remembering that if we do we will get more than what we could have ever gotten in this life, saving our lives in the process.

That's not the way you usually hear about self-denial, is it? But that's what Jesus taught on self-denial. Here is where I want to warn us. We need to be very careful with this idea that we are nothing and worthless. It's true that we don't add anything to God and that the Bible says in Daniel that the whole inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. Compared to God we are nothing, but He has placed an intrinsic value on each one of you and that value is worth more than ten thousand worlds. So while it's true that I'm nothing and I should never trust myself at all because there is no good thing in my flesh, at the same time I need to value me and myself and be willing to deny myself pleasures now so that I can enjoy greater treasures and pleasures awaiting me. That's the biblical doctrine of self. May we leave this place trusting in this God who denied Himself for us. Amen.