



LAYING THE AXE TO THE ROOT SERIES

Laying The Axe To The Root

Matthew 3:10-12

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

We have emphasized the wonderful baptism in the Holy Spirit which Jesus provides for us. However, we have neglected that His coming also signaled the time when "the axe is laid to the root" and when the chaff will be burned with fire. Verse 11 that promises the baptism in the Spirit is preceded and followed by verses that talk about a cleansing work. However, so many of us have opted for one without the other. We received the Spirit baptism, but are not willing to allow God to lay the axe to the root.

Part 1 : LAYING THE AXE TO THE ROOT OF SELF Sunday May 15, 2005

Mark 16:20

Could there be things in our lives that prevent the Lord from working with us to confirm His word.

Wrong motives in the ministry:

Philippians 1:15-17

There were people who preached the right message, yet their motives were wrong – strife, envy and selfish ambition!

3 John 1:9

Diotrephes, a member of the local church had an intense desire for preeminence. Motivated by a desire for preeminence, he spoke maliciously against other leaders, refused to be hospitable and prevented others from extending hospitality to other leaders.

2 Corinthians 2:17

To adulterate the Word – is to peddle the Word for personal gain. So there can be people who preach the Word, tainted with personal ideas, with the intent of making personal gain.

It is possible to do spiritual things and yet be wrongly motivated.

Manifestations of the root of self:

1. Self Promotion (I want people to know me and like me)

Why are you doing what you are doing?

John 5:41, 44

We need to come to a place, where like Jesus, we do not receive honour from men! Whether or not people praise and applaud us, is no longer a matter of concern. Instead our only desire is to seek the honour that comes from God above.

We know we are walking free from self when our hunger for the honour that comes from God causes us to forsake the praise of men.



John 7:18

We must ask ourselves whose glory do we seek, God's or our own?

When we speak from ourselves, of ourselves, build our reputation and solicit praise from men we are seeking our own glory.

Only to the degree that we are truly seeking to glorify God, are our motives true and there is no unrighteousness in our hearts.

1 Corinthians 10:31

2. Selfish Ambition (I want to be known as some one who accomplished great things)

Self reliance instead of dependence on the Holy Spirit

Philippians 2:1-4, 3:3

We must do nothing motivated by selfish ambition.

2 Corinthians 5:16

How often we seek to know people "after the flesh", i.e. we want connections with those who are highly regarded by man with the hope that they will be able to "pull us up" in life and ministry. If God does not set these connections up, and rather we are seeking these connections motivated by our own personal drive for achievement, then we are in the realm of selfish ambition.

To be motivated by selfish ambition is to be motivated by the flesh. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6) and they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8).

If we sow to the flesh (self), we will reap corruption, decay and ruin (Galatians 6:8). The work you do motivated by self will not have permanence.

If we are motivated by self, we cannot be led by the Spirit because the flesh opposes what the Holy Spirit wants (Galatians 5:17).

Instead seek Spirit inspired direction for all you do.

3. Self Protection (my life is too dear to myself)

All of us are born with a natural tendency for self protection / self- preservation, which to a degree is needful and good. However, self preservation that keeps us from obeying God is bad. It is a manifestation of a root of self that must die.

Wanting to preserve one's reputation at the expense of disobeying God or being unwilling to step out in faith. This also must die!

Acts 20:22-24

Paul did not count his life too dear. He was motivated by something higher – to finish the course set for him and complete the ministry given to him by God.

John 12:24,25

Our desire for self preservation – of preserving our own life at the expense of obeying God – will keep us from multiplication and fruitfulness for God's Kingdom.

You have to die to your own reputation to be used by God in the supernatural.



Every time you yield yourself to the Spirit to flow in the prophetic or in the gifts of the Spirit, you are dying to self. You are laying your reputation on the line, because if you miss it you risk being labeled a false prophet! However, it takes faith to lay self aside and step out and flow in the Spirit and allow His gifts to flow through you to minister to the needs of God's people.

Instead lay down your life.

4. Self Humiliation (I feel good when I put myself down)

Self abasement. A false pretense of humility.

2 Corinthians 3:5 Romans 15:15-19

While we know fully well that our sufficiency comes from God – we must not put on a false pretense of humility where we fail to acknowledge the gifts, callings and ministry given to us by God. Paul “boasted” of the things the Lord had done through him.

Moses was a man of two extremes. When he began, he was extremely “self” motivated (Acts 7:22-25). Forty years later, he was so “self-abased” to the point where he was unwilling to be what God wanted him to be. This angered God (Exodus 4:14).

Dying To Self - The Apostle Paul's testimony:

Galatians 2:20

Philippians 1:21

2 Corinthians 5:14,15

1 Corinthians 15:31,32

Paul said “I die daily”. He lived a crucified life. On the one hand it was true the every day his life was in danger and in proximity of death because of his persecutors. And yet, that's the way he lived. A crucified life.

We are to take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). In fact if we do not, we cannot be Christ's disciple (Luke 14:27).

What does it mean to take up our cross? Some people paint a picture of an ascetic, a life of renunciation when they talk about taking up the cross. But taking up the cross has more to do with who you are inside than with what you have on the outside. The cross is a place of death – death to self. You can live in a mud hut out in no-where land and still be self-willed, self-ruled, self-centered, pursuing selfish ambitions and seeking to promote self. If so, then you are really not taking up your cross. Another person can live in a nice home, drive a nice car and still be truly dead to self. He can have a humble spirit that is free of self. So to take up your cross and to die to self has more to do with who you are on the inside than outward forms of piety and religiosity!

2 Corinthians 4:5

Whom are we proclaiming, promoting, glorifying? Is it self or is it Jesus?

At the end of it all – if people leave talking about you instead of about Jesus, then you really have not preached Christ! If people are attracted to you instead of being drawn closer to Jesus, then you really have not preached Christ.

Making This Relevant To Daily Life

1. At home

As Husband/Wife



Each time you give up your rights – your right to be served a cup of coffee, your right to be attended to, your right to be heard – you are dying to self!

Develop the ability to give without expecting anything in return (Luke 6:30)

Develop the ability to forgive instead of retaliating.

Develop the ability to love without expecting anything in return. This is the true kind of agape love!

As parents

Don't enforce your selfish dreams on your children. Dare to listen to God and encourage your children to pursue God's call on their lives.

Don't try to live out your unfulfilled dreams through your children. This is being SELFISH! Allow your children to pursue God's dream for their lives.

As children (Teens/Twenties)

Don't be rebellious and self-willed. Die to self by learning to obey!

Instead of being so wrapped up with your own needs and feelings, consider the feelings and needs of your parents!

2. At school/college (Teens/Twenties)

Walk in love towards your peers. Love and forgive instead of retaliating.

Give up an opportunity for some body else. Sow that opportunity as a seed and believe God for your reward!

3. On your job

Learn to yield instead of insisting on your own ideas.

Acknowledge your faults. Dare to say I was wrong. Apologise. You destroy your pride and you will die a thousand deaths to self!

4. In the church

Don't compete with one another for position, prominence, recognition in church. Whatever you do, do it with a selfless servant's heart.

Luke 14:7-11

Don't try to promote yourself, your talent, your gifting, your anointing, your calling in church. It stinks!! Glorify Jesus!

"I want to be seen". "I want to be heard". "I want to be recognized". "I want to be acknowledged". – Please die to these things! Die to your own self-importance! Let God be seen, let God be heard, let God be recognized and let God be acknowledged!

You have to die to your own reputation to be used by God in the supernatural.

5. In the ministry



Husbands just because you are called to the ministry – don't force your wife to give up her call and follow you in the ministry! This is being SELFISH! Give your wife the freedom to pursue God's call on her life, even if it is in the professional world.

When we city folk go out to minister in the village – learn to adjust, accommodate and be happy with what we are given. Don't demand for comforts. It's hard on our flesh – but what an opportunity to die to self!

Repentance & Dying To Self

Every journey begins with a departure.

If we are to journey into higher realms in God, we must first be willing to depart from the things that are keeping us from getting there. We must depart from self. Because no flesh (self) can glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29).

John 3:30

Psalm 139:23,24

Check your motivations. If your motivation originates from self – self promotion, selfish ambition, self protection – stop. Don't proceed. Ask the Lord to change your heart.

Confess. Repent. Receive the Spirit's refining work!