



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – September 14, 2023

The Lord be with you.

I was surprised one day last week, when I walked into a large chain bookstore and there was what was called the self-help section of books. Now, I have not been in the bookstore for quite a while, and the self-help section was new to me. And I looked and I saw that the self-help section of books, it was larger than the history section. Larger than a science section... Than the biography section. I do not have figures for the year 2020, but for the year 2019, I see that there were 18.6 million self-help books sold. Self-Help is a booming business, there are self-help gurus everywhere. We are people wanting some help with self, because self is big these days... Self has been big, well, since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Now I'm for self-help, whether it's helping people lose weight, stop smoking, be more positive. Self-Help is okay as far as self-help can go, but self-help is really just superficial because Self-Help cannot go deep to the core of our problem, which is after all, self.

Now I know that sounds strange to a culture that talks so much about self-esteem, self-actualization, self-confidence, self-expression and love to send selfie pictures. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not about self. Is not about self-help, rather Jesus talked about denying the self... About losing the self. In fact, Jesus says that losing the self is the way to life. The way to fulfillment. I'm gonna read the words that Jesus talking about, our need to lose the self. I am in the Gospel of Mark chapter 8, starting at verse 34. Jesus calls a crowd with His disciples and said to them, If anyone to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life.

Now, I wanna see if I can set the scene. Here is what Jesus is talking about, he's saying weeks before His own crucifixion. And yet he's asking people to take up their cross and follow Him. Now, that would have gotten everybody's attention, everybody would have understood what Jesus meant as Rome and its armies occupied the Holy Land, and it was a horrific common site for people to see a prisoner who had been condemned to death by Rome, to see that prisoner forced to take his cross, and to carry his cross through the village or town, and by carrying that cross through the town, he was saying to everyone, he was declaring to everyone his allegiance to Rome, by carrying that cross through the town, he was declaring that his life was over. That



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his life no longer belonged to him, it was in the denying of self in order to declare allegiance to Rome.

So, follow what Jesus is saying here because it's radical. It's life changing. That there must come a time in our lives when we let go the old self, we let go the old sinful, guilty, condemn self in order to find ourselves in Jesus Christ, to find our true life in him. It is interesting that the Greek word here, translated deny, it is the same word used of Peter's denial of the Lord Jesus when Peter swore or deny Jesus saying, I do not know the man. So, there must come a time when we say of our old sinful condemns self, I do not know the man, we deny the person we once were, guilty, condemned to find our true self in Jesus Christ.

To deny the self, we once were to come alive in him. That is the gospel, that is salvation. To find ourselves in Christ Jesus and Christ Jesus in us. No Self-Help in the gospel, the self is beyond help rather salvation is the losing, salvation is the letting go. The saying good-bye, good riddance, sayonara, so long forever to the old self, we once were to find our life in Christ Jesus. It's not about religion, it's not about trying to improve self, it is the discovery of ourselves alive in Christ, in Christ, alive in us forever. I cannot think of a better explanation of what it means to deny self and take up our cross and follow Jesus than what the Apostle Paul says in Galatians chapter 2, verses 19 and 20, where he says, I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

So here is new life in us, new power, new ability, as we discover our true self in Christ Jesus, I like the way the old Scotts preacher, Horatius Boner said it years ago about finding ourselves in Christ Jesus, he said upon a life I have not lived, upon a death I did not die, another is a life, another's death I stake my whole eternity. Here is such amazing, good news to find ourselves in Christ Jesus.

So loving, Father, I pray for you to one of us today who say goodbye, good riddance to the old self, to live in the life and power of our resurrected Lord Jesus. Do show us the possibilities, the wonder of divine life in him.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.