

The Death to Self

by Michael Koulianos

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the importance of dying to self and anchoring our lives in the truth of Jesus amidst the challenges faced by the church today.

Duration: 1:25:46

Scripture: Matthew 26:36

Topics: "Death To Self", "Surrendering to God's Will"

Description

Michael Koulianos emphasizes the necessity of dying to self in order to truly follow Jesus, highlighting that the essence of discipleship involves surrendering our personal desires and ambitions to embrace God's will. He draws parallels between the agony of Gethsemane and our own struggles with self, urging the congregation to seek a deeper relationship with Christ through humility and obedience. Koulianos warns against the individualism that plagues the modern church, calling for a return to the biblical understanding of community and sacrifice. He encourages believers to embrace their weaknesses as a means to experience God's strength and to live a life that glorifies Jesus above all else.

Transcript

Can we just remain standing and, uh... And, uh, you know what to do. Let's just start praying in the Spirit. Come on, for about a minute here.

Come on, just lift your voice. You can sing in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit. Praise you, Lord.

We bless you tonight. Come on, just put your, uh... Put His praise on your lips just for a few more minutes. Blessed, blessed, blessed be the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Just lift your voices, lift your voices. Keep blessing Him.

Let's go straight into His presence. Holy, holy, holy, holy. And keep blessing Him, keep blessing Him.

All over the room, keep blessing Him. Holy, holy, holy, holy. Let's sing that together.

Holy, holy, holy, holy. Eyes right where you are, keep singing the word of God. Take joy, Lord.

Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ears. Let's lift our hands to heaven and sing that again. Lift your voice, I love you, Lord.

I love you, Lord. And I lift my voice. To worship you, O my soul.

Rejoice. Take joy, my King. In what you hear.

Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ears. Let's lift it one more time, David. I love you, Lord.

Every voice, come on, everything in you. I love you, Lord. And I lift my voice.

To worship you, O my soul. Rejoice. Take joy, my King.

In what you hear. Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ears. One more time, David.

Come on, let's pour it out just one more time. I love you, Lord. I love you, Lord.

And I lift my voice. To worship you, O my soul. Rejoice.

Take joy, my King. In what you hear. Let it be a sweet, sweet sound.

Yes, let it be a sweet, sweet sound. Oh, let it be a sweet, sweet sound. Lord, with hands lifted tonight in your presence, we declare as a family, speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

As we sit at the feet of Jesus tonight, like Mary, hearing your word, we ask you to speak to us and touch us and don't leave us the same. Shake every ounce of repetition and monotony out of us and electrify our hearts for Jesus. Touch us deeply tonight, Lord, in the places that only you can get to.

Those inexplainable places. Lord, let us feast tonight on the food that the world doesn't know of. The bread of heaven.

And you said, I'm the bread of God who's come down from heaven. Why don't you ask him tonight for a fresh revelation of Jesus? Lord, speak to us, touch us, anoint us afresh for these last days. Light us on fire tonight, Lord.

We are your people, the sheep of your pasture, and we worship you. We all say, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. There are none like you.

There are none beside you. None in heaven. None on the earth.

There's no one like you, Lord. Oh, just one glimpse of your beauty changes everything. So we come lowly tonight, Lord, the best we know how, because you come lowly.

Teach us, Jesus, tonight. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Can we seal that with praise? Come on, let's lift a praise for the Lord. We give you all the glory. All the glory.

All the glory. All the glory. Just one more.

Come on, lift a praise. We give you all the glory. All the glory.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

You can be seated. Thank you, David. Oh, it's good to be back.

I've missed you guys. It's been about a year, unless you count the end of the year event, but it's been about a year since I've been back here. It's such a privilege to be here.

Are you grateful for Jesus tonight? I also want to thank Michael and Larissa for being just the cream of the crop. God has given you guys the best pastors. Can we thank the Lord for them, really? They are an incredible blessing, not only to you all, but to the nations, to my wife, Jess, and I, to our children.

We've spent so much time together in the presence of the Lord, and all over the place, vacationing together. They are such blessings to us, personally. And the Bible says that those who teach us the word of God are worthy of double honor.

And it's one of the things I'm watching the devil try to steal from a generation, especially you, Gen Z, who, by the way, have a mighty calling and mandate on your lives. The devil is trying to remove the beauty of honoring those who teach us the word of God. And we must recover that.

But this faith has been handed down once and for all. And it is right to honor those who teach us the word of God and shepherd our souls into the heart of Jesus. So can we all please thank Michael and Larissa for all they do.

I love you. I love you. All right.

Well, I feel like God gave me a sword tonight. The best ones are the ones that cut you open while you're preaching. So I want to be cut open as well.

It's good to see the Seidman's here. Chris and Tara, I love you. They were just at my house last week.

And, gosh, what a gift you guys are to us. Thank you. I love you both.

Well, I'm not at Jesus Image tonight, in case you didn't know that. And my father-in-law, Pastor Benny, is preaching. We call him Master Yoda.

And he's teaching on the fear of the Lord tonight. That still is a legal message, right? All right. Talk back to me tonight.

I need you to tap the well a little bit. I want to talk to you tonight about glorious weakness. And before I get into the text, I want to say that the church is at a crossroads right now.

I realize where I'm standing. This house has so blessed my life. I've been touched all over this room.

This is one of the few places I come to where I'm incredibly expectant to be touched as I'm preaching. But I've had encounters with the Lord here. And I understand where I'm preaching.

I understand the platform and the spirit that I'm standing on. I understand that the nations are watching. And what is preached here and what takes place here seems to have a very catalytic effect and an exponential effect in that area.

And so this is a very vital house. And in many ways, this is like a megaphone when it comes to the Lord wanting to release a word to his church. And so I'm aware of the seriousness of that.

I'm not depressed in the least. But I'm sober. Is that okay? For those who know me, Miller will tell you, I'm serious for about four hours a week.

And it's usually when I'm on the platform or on the golf course. I mean, they do call me the propeller. Whoever comes my way gets chopped up.

And it just is the way it is. I came to preach the truth tonight. I'm very sober because the church is at a crossroads.

We're at a critical juncture when it comes to God's agenda for the church and God's agenda for the ages. God has a plan and he's wanting to anchor, listen carefully, our hearts in the age to come. We're too anchored here.

We are pilgrims. That's what the scripture calls us. Of course, God has called us to impact the nations.

But our hearts must be anchored in the heart of Jesus and in the age to come. Your generation is going to have to fight for truths that have been handed down and paid for in blood. Core elements of what the Christian life is are under attack.

Unfortunately, the attack is not being waged from the secular world, but now the attack is an interior attack. And because of excess in some areas, the church is choosing to sin on the other side of the road. We now call discipleship control.

We call reading the text, reading the scriptures harsh. Yet all the while we cling to Jesus but it's not the Jesus of the Bible. It's another Jesus.

And I want you to leave tonight knowing that there are mountains God has called you to die on. Non-negotiables. Specifically, everything hinges on this.

Who is Jesus? And what does it mean to follow him? I'd like you to take your Bibles to Matthew 26, verse 36 through 42. I'll begin reading in verse 36. Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, which is called the olive press, by the way.

The place of crushing. That place exists for everyone who had the audacity to ask the Lord to make us like him. Anybody who wants to be like Jesus will make their way to Gethsemane more than once.

And he said to the disciples, sit here while I go over there. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and he began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then he said to them, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death.

Wow. Stay here and watch with me. Aren't you glad you don't watch alone? We don't wait on the Lord to come when we're in private.

We wait on him to manifest. We actually wait with him. Thank you, Jesus, for that.

He went a little farther and fell on his face and prayed saying, oh my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but your will be done. Say, your will be done.

Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping and said to Peter, what? Could you not watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray. Lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Excuse me. Again, a second time, he went away and prayed saying, oh my father, if this cup cannot pass away from me unless I drink it, your will be done. Say, your will be done.

Jesus joins no man's dream. Excuse me. Jesus joins no man's career.

Jesus doesn't come alongside our churches. Jesus is not part of the dream. He is the dream.

I want that to settle. I want you to think of that. Because especially Gen Z, you're being fed a hellish buffet that is fueled in individualism and has forgotten the epicenter of the gospel which is death to self.

If we are too advanced or sensitive to be corrected, we've left Calvary. I'm not correcting you, I'm speaking. You know what I'm doing.

That's why I said I know where I'm standing tonight. Jesus joins nothing and is part of nothing. Because he is everything.

Basic math, even if you were homeschooled as somebody who was, he who is all can be part of nothing. If you were like me and you were a professional athlete and the last thing you ever wanted to do was be involved in public speaking, which was my greatest fear, God knows that'll get glory, doesn't he? The plan for my life was to win a bunch of tournaments and do the Tim Tebow thing and thank the Lord when I was done with my plan. The Lord's like, no, we're not going to do that with you.

I already got Tim Tebow. He's doing a way better job than you. Jesus is an all or nothing God.

And when Jesus becomes the dream, listen, our dreams are swallowed up in his dream. Our dreams are swallowed by his dream. And if you're wondering what God's dream is for us, the father's dream is in his son.

Every plan the father has is hemmed up in the glory of his son. Ephesians 1, verses 1 through 22. You don't mind if I read a bunch of Bible to you, do you? A friend of mine once said, please forgive me as I teach, as I read the Bible, as I teach the word.

Ephesians 1. I'm going to read you a bunch of Bible and break all the rules. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. This is verse 1. To the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and father of the Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. So it's all in Jesus, friends, all of it. Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself. Say, I belong to the Lord. According to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace by which he made us accepted in the beloved.

In him, in Jesus, we have redemption through his blood. Say, I'm redeemed. The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.

This is God's idea that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, listen now, here's the goal. He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in him. Say, in Jesus.

In him also we have obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. Is anyone excited tonight that the gospel is God's idea and not ours? Salvation was the Lord's idea and not ours. God healing your body is the Lord's idea, not ours.

God delivering you from addiction is the Lord's idea, not ours. It starts in Jesus. Therefore, it is all about Jesus.

In him, in Jesus, you also trusted after you heard the word of truth. What is the word of truth? The gospel of your salvation in whom also having believed you were sealed with the spirit of promise. Your redemption is incredibly secure.

Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory. This is God's idea. Say this, the father's dream is in his son.

Say, therefore, my dreams must be swallowed up by his dream. God, the father, you don't have to do that. Sorry, it's bad leadership.

I should have been more clear. God, the father is crazy about his son. Crazy about his son.

He loves everything about Jesus. He thinks Jesus is absolutely phenomenal. What is it about Jesus? Or I should say, what is one of the qualities that makes Jesus so glorious? Go to Philippians chapter 2. You say he's given us a lot of Bible.

Let me say this tonight. You don't learn your Bible. You will not survive these last days in the spirit.

You better learn your Bible more than your favorite song. I'm talking to you now. If you don't learn your Bible, you'll never allow the Lord to determine the narrative.

It is time to read, know, chew, and eat your Bible. Not a blogger. Not some dude who played Minecraft for ten years and watched a few theology videos and then started a podcast.

No. I don't care if they wear flannel shirts and grow out their beard. It doesn't make them a theologian.

They're like 27 or 30, have no connection to the historical church, don't give their heart to the text, have not yielded to the grand narrative of the text, and our generations listen to them. It's comical. It's a different Jesus.

Our opinions do not set the captive free. The Word of God does. The devil does not fear our opinions.

That's why we need more sermons that begin with chapter and verse rather than I just feel like. I appreciate how you feel, but you better give me the Word of God. The stakes are high.

There's just one Jesus. You do know that. There's just one.

So if there are eight versions of the Lord, seven are wrong. There's just one. The Jesus of the Bible.

I said the Jesus of the Bible. You cannot deconstruct Him and try to build Him back. He's good.

He is secure. He is the God of the ages. And He'll be there when we're all done with these initiatives.

He is the King of glory. The immovable rock. And the worst part about deception is that you don't know that you are.

It's like Francis Chan said at our church. It's the very definition. He's like, that's what makes it so crazy.

Is that when you are deceived, you don't know it. That's the sliminess of it all. And God has called you.

Listen to me. I came here to share the word of the Lord with you. God has called your generation to carry on in the gospel.

You must receive the charge. Because our family, our inheritance, our heritage, our ancestors in God died in blood to hand the gospel to us. Carry on.

I said carry on. Learn Jesus according to the scripture. Learn of Him according to the scripture.

The stakes are too high. And you, as I said earlier, you must discover the mountain that you're willing to die on. As for me, when it comes to the cross and Jesus, that's a mountain I'm giving my neck to.

When it comes to the word of God, we must not budge. Scripture says, forever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven. Philippians 2. What is it about Jesus, one of these glorious aspects, if not the most preeminent aspect of His person that makes Him so glorious? Verse 5 of Philippians 2. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

In other words, think like this. Let your soul and your mind be renewed in this way. Have this disposition, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.

Oh, I love verse 7. But made Himself of no reputation. Let me stop there for a moment. When you fall in love with Jesus, His church, and I don't mean the church building, or even the church you lead or pastor or work at.

I'm not talking about that. His church, His bride, becomes more important to you than your personal preference. In the immature stages of the faith, everything is about us.

And so we choose churches, listen carefully, that recognize our giftings. Really. I'll go to the church that sees me and my gifting.

And I'll give that church just enough time to see my gifting. And if they don't see it, I'll become offended and move to the next church, hoping they see my gifting. There's a few things wrong with that whole scenario.

One is, it's not our gifting. It's the Lord's. And if you've really got it like that, you don't have to make room for your gifting.

Your gifting will make room for you. That's what the Bible says. So without knowing, we don't know this, but it's what the devil is doing, is we begin to go to church for us.

If you're a worship leader, a musician, you go to the church where you get to play the most sets. If you think you're called to preach, you go to the church that you think will give you the greatest opportunity to open your mouth. Thank you.

That's very funny. And if you have a culture like Upper Room, I hope at Jesus Image, that spirit, it almost glows in the dark. You can smell the minute they walk in.

I know that one right there. You're here to show us how great you are. Without knowing, you're saying, this is my house, not the Lord's.

It is the opposite and the antithesis of what the father loves about his son. He made himself of no reputation. I've heard it a million times.

I left there because they didn't recognize my anointing. Of course they didn't. They weren't looking at you.

They don't have time to look at you. Miller said once, I love, you probably don't remember this, he said, I love Jesus Image because y'all keep the crown on his head. Now, theologically, the crown never leaves his head.

But I know what he's saying. You're just looking at Jesus and ascribing all glory and honor over and over and over and over and over again. This is what the church is meant to be.

Capital C. Big C. The Church. A people in one accord who have made themselves of no reputation. Now, that's not to say that the Lord doesn't take that person who's made themselves of no reputation and raise them up.

It is to say, we cannot raise ourselves up. We don't call ourselves. We do not anoint ourselves.

We do not send ourselves. A group of friends and I, we started a ministry called The Send years ago. And an old preacher came and met with me.

He goes, you better, he said, tell me about The Send. I said, well, we're gonna meet. It's gonna be a sending movement.

It was all wonderful. And I'll never forget what he said. He goes, you better get the glory of God in those stadiums because it won't be The Send if you don't.

It'll just be called The Spend because you can't call yourself or send yourself. You better get God into that stadium. And he's right.

Nobody calls themselves. This isn't to discourage you for the last day harvest. It's just to propel you properly.

It's about Jesus. I said it's about Jesus. I don't just mean it's about thinking about Him.

It is. That's where it begins. That's very holy.

You'll never waste your time thinking about Jesus. Ever. In fact, it's pretty dangerous to begin thinking about Him because you might just get caught up in adoration.

I don't think about Him in traffic too much. I know, I understand that. You start thinking about the Lord at home and two hours goes by and it's glorious and wonderful.

It's wonderful to think about Him but that's not what I'm talking about right now. I'm talking about the purpose of His body. It is to bring glory to Him.

Taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself. Friends, humility is not controlling and neither is the call to it. It is Christian.

I said it is Christian. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death. Say death.

Even the death of the cross. Here we go now. Therefore, in other words, because of what you just read, because He became of no reputation, took the form of a servant, died a death, even the death of the cross, therefore, this is why in other words, God has also highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, of those on earth and of those under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The most glorious thing, the most glorious thing in the heart of the Father is when the nations bow to Jesus as Lord. The other day, I was watching someone who I've watched for a long time and I've enjoyed their teachings for a while, a few years. Somebody asked them a very clear question.

Is there salvation outside of Jesus? The answer shocked me. I watched it with my eyes. I don't believe in gossip.

I think the church is chucking stones across the aisles rather than joining hands in prayer. We have to come together now. However, when this person said, of course there's salvation outside of a personal experience with Jesus, I almost passed out.

I thought to myself, Sir, you need to not be in the ministry. If you don't know that, what do you know? How do we get there? By not reading the Bible. That's how you get there.

You get there by creating your own perspectives, lofty thoughts, lofty ideas outside of the holy text. We must return to the Bible again. You say, but Michael, you're the Jesus preacher.

I preach the Jesus of the Bible. I want to make that clear. It's the Jesus of the Word of God.

The Jesus from Genesis to Revelation. If we cannot answer clearly that no man cometh to the Father, but by Jesus, what are we doing? I don't really care. If someone can't answer that question, I don't care about anything else that they have to say.

I'm certainly not going to let them counsel me. It's not meant to dishonor, but we have to draw the line somewhere. There is one name, one name under heaven and on the earth by which men can be saved.

The name of Jesus. To say such a thing is to not even know what his name means. When we say that we confess Jesus as Lord, we're not saying he's the most qualified leader.

He is. But it's much deeper than that. To confess... It doesn't mean like Jesus is a little better than somebody else who could lead you and he's the supreme leader leading the parade of your life.

No. To confess Jesus as Lord is to confess him as Jehovah, as Adonai, as the God of the ages by whom and through whom all things were created. It is to say that Jesus is the God of the burning bush.

To say that he is Lord is to say that Jesus parted the Red Sea. Listen to me. It is to say that Jesus had a conversation with Abraham.

It is to say that Jesus was dancing in the fiery furnace. It is to say that Jesus is the God of Genesis through Malachi and Matthew to Revelation. It is to say that Jesus is creator and king of all.

Therefore, he is the only one who can save. When I say the name Jesus, when I even utter his name, I am declaring he is the Lord, our salvation. And any other perspective outside the Bible will create a fallen, false version of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the foundation of what I'm saying tonight. Now, bear with me for a few more minutes. This Jesus has revealed himself through the cross.

Through the cross. Individualism is plaguing the church right now. My needs, my perspective, my criticism, my view, and dishonor is running rampant towards leaders, towards shepherds.

It's a satanic plot to rob the church of glory. To rob the church of true discipleship. I, I, I. Well, I think, I think, I want, I need, you failed me.

Individualism is running rampant. And we've forgotten that the Lord's prayer begins with our father. Our father.

Yes, he's my father. But he's our father. That means that my perspective is not king.

The cross of Jesus. I'm not confused, I'm just waiting. Take your Bibles to John chapter 8, verse 28, please.

Say, I want to be broken. You don't know what you're asking, maybe, but if you do, just ask it anyways. I want to be broken.

John 8, 28. Then Jesus said to them, When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He. Oh my.

I'm going to say that again. When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He. I'm going to say it again.

When you lift up the Son of Man, then, and only then, will you know that I am. This is not speaking of a song or a set. I have the joy of leading a precious group of worshipers that many of you know.

So this isn't a criticism on music and worship. We love it. We burn for worship.

Absolutely. But that's not what this text is referring to. This is not saying if you sing a song, you will know that Jesus is the I Am.

Now, before I touch on this, I want you to look at John 12, verses 31 through 33. Can you just give me a few more minutes? Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler will be cast down.

Listen carefully now. And if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself. You say, I thought that had to do with my favorite Upper Room or Jesus image song.

No. The Scripture tells us what this is about. This, in verse 33, He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Jesus declares His deity by the way He dies. Come on. That's the opposite of self-exaltation.

If we were going to show somebody that we were God, we wouldn't do it or accomplish it by being nailed naked to a tree. But there's something about the way Jesus died that opened the eyes of His followers. That's the glory of the cross.

And that's why the devil is trying to remove it and destroy it and burn it up in church life. Don't talk to me. Don't correct me.

Don't sit me down. God spoke to me. You can't change my mind.

It's all the antithesis of what it looks like to carry the tree. It's devilish. In the devil's heart, he declares, I will ascend to the hill of the north.

I will be like the Most High. What did He say to Adam and Eve? In the day you eat of it, what? You will be like God. But Jesus chooses a completely opposite and different ATM code.

A completely different method to declare who He is. He's saying, boys, watch the way I die. Because the way I die will prove to you that I am the Lord.

When I'm lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself. Do you know why the gates of hell are prevailing? Because there's a Jesus deficiency in the church. He said, I'll build it.

I'll build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail. If the gates of hell are prevailing, and they are in many ways, it's because Jesus Himself is not being declared according to Holy Scripture. When's the last time you listened to a podcast on the cross? There's not an avenger on the throne.

There's a lamb on the throne. Not a superhero up there. John saw glory in the crucifixion of Jesus.

When we think glory, we think, watch me do my thing, not watch me die. Watch me work a wonder, not watch me die. When we think glory, we don't think persecution.

But we all need a limp. We all need it. We need it.

We need it to be like Jesus. It's a sign of greatness. Brokenness, humility is greatness.

He has redefined greatness perfectly through Calvary. God loves you too much to not weaken you. He doesn't want us to walk with confidence in ourselves.

He wants us to drag one leg behind us for our own good. This is more the faith. This, I should say, is the faith, the cross of Jesus.

It is more the faith than most of what we set our minds to. Watch us die. We'll bleed with love and mercy.

And that declares that he is king of glory. He's impossible to see outside the cross. He's shrouded outside the cross.

The heart remains hardened and the eyes remain blind outside of the man from Galilee who is God Almighty suspended between heaven and earth to redeem mankind. We can't see him outside the cross. That's the paradox of it all.

That's the mystery. That we find this crucified lamb as being beautiful. That we wage war differently than the spirit of the age.

We are the cheek turners. That's what we do. We are foot washers.

We're those who, hopefully like the disciples, rejoice when we're counted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord. When we're in lack, we give what we have away. We're those who live completely differently than the world.

We love our enemies. And it's so hard to love our enemies, we just choose not to have any. That's the only way to do it.

To see them as vessels that God is using to make us like His Son. Paul writes in Romans 8, 36-39, For your sake we're killed all day long. We're counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors. Through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, listen to this church, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How many of you think Jesus loves you? How do you know? I want you to think Bible. Don't think because I know. Don't think because you just know.

How do you know biblically? He died. Well, give me a verse. John 3, 16 For God so loved the world.

That's not speaking of a mount. That word so is not speaking of God loved me with a million pounds of His heart. No.

It's speaking about method. This is how God loves. For God so loved.

In other words, in this way. This is how God tells the world He loves them. For God so loved.

In this way God shares His love. That He gave. The Greek word there is offered.

It's priestly. It's Levitical. He offered His son as a lamb that came to die.

This is how God says I love you. He's not saying I loved you so much that I just gave Jesus away to you for 33 years. He's saying the way that I tell you I love you is by dying.

And I want to invite up a room into death to self tonight. I want to invite a generation to put your opinions aside and die to the need to be right. I want to invite you to die to the need to win the argument and just die on the altar.

I want to invite you into the Christian life tonight. To die to yourself. You say I don't like the devil but I'm really into me.

Few things are more demonic. Few things are more demonic than to be really into you. It doesn't mean you shouldn't value you.

Of course you should. You can't love people as you love yourself if you don't value you. I'm not saying that.

I'm talking about the will. The seat of the soul. The throne of the soul.

Nevertheless not my will but thine be done. Don't you see the grand mastery of it all? Don't you see it? That Jesus dies on a dead tree as the first fruit and Adam eats from a living tree. He eats the fruit of a living tree beautiful to the eye and death comes.

Jesus dies on a dead tree. Adam says yes to himself. Jesus says no to himself.

Death comes through Adam. Life comes through Jesus. It's all very masterful.

It's all very beautiful. Adam says no God. Yes Adam in a garden.

Jesus says no to Jesus. Yes to the Father in a garden. This is wisdom.

I said that is wise. That is the definition of wisdom. The very embodiment of wisdom.

The wisest thing you can do is die to you and come alive in Jesus. You know the longer you do this thing the more he cuts you away. You've got less to bring to the table.

Less activity. Less ideas. Less activity but more obedience.

Less initiatives. More simplicity. He just slowly cuts you away.

So hopefully by the end of this thing you just look like Jesus. And that's enough. I said that's enough.

I want to ask this generation tonight who will you be like? What will you choose? Do you want to be like the spirit of this age or like Jesus? You say that but he's the crucified and risen one. I'm asking you to count the cost tonight. Count it.

You say what does he want? Everything. It's quite the dangerous prayers I said earlier to say Lord make me like Jesus. It's the only reason worth living but you need to determine tonight if you'll be a cross carrier or a self carrier.

Do you want to be like John the Beloved? Who finds glory in the crucified Lamb of God? Will you be like Eve or like Mary? Will you be like Eve who chooses wisdom outside the person of God? The knowledge of good and evil? The things of this world? Or will you be like Mary who says according to thy word I have no idea how you're going to do it but let it be done in my life. Will you be like Eve who chooses consistent conversations with the serpent? When you could be fellowshiping with the Lord? In the name of depth in the church we try to come up with new ideas which Paul called wasteful arguments? Lofty arguments? Or will you be like Mary who's enamored by the message that comes from God and is willing to be viewed as the illegitimate mother so that the word of God can come into the world? Friends, death is a window into divine life. Death to self is a portal for divine life to flow through you.

I want to read this verse to you and then I'm going to pray. Is this okay tonight? This is my third sermon of the day and I'm already tired of my voice. Bill Johnson said it's time for a break when you're tired of the way you sound.

Say this. The window into glory is the cross. Psalm 104 verses 29 through 30.

If you're there say uh-huh. Alright? You shouldn't say uh-huh in church. I'm joking.

It's a joke. Listen to this. I want you to see the economy of God here.

How the Lord does something. You hide your face. Oh wait.

I still hear pages turning. Psalm 104 verses 29 through 30. You hide your face.

They are troubled. You take away their breath. They die and return to their dust.

You send forth your spirit and they are created. You renew the face of the earth. I'm going to read that again.

You hide your face. They are troubled. You take away their breath.

They die. Return to dust. You send forth your spirit and they are created.

Hold on a minute. I thought I come alive first in myself and then I die. No, no, no, no.

Not in God's economy. Not in God's way. First you die.

Then he breathes into you. You're not fully alive until you die. Jesus made a statement.

He said if you hold on to your life you'll lose it. And he's not just speaking of the age to come. It does refer to that but it's speaking of the now as well.

If you hold on to your life you will lose it. But if you lose your life you will gain it. Every time I have a moment that is Calvary like it is an invitation for the life of the spirit to come upon me and flow through me.

You got to get that. I don't know. I can't shake it into you.

But it's the way it works. It's the way it works with healing. It's the way it works with intimacy with God.

It's the way it works with preaching. God gives you a word that kills you. God will put a word in your heart and command you to preach it and take every fiery dart that comes with it.

Because it's meant to kill you. It's meant to take you to the end of yourself. It's what he did with Moses.

Go into Egypt where you just ran from and deliver the people. It's a death. There's a death in the command.

There's a death in the invitation. But it's what Kathleen Kuhlman talked about. All her ministry.

You got to die. Nobody knew what she was talking about. I don't want to just drop dead.

That's what I used to think as a little kid. I don't want to die on the platform. She'd say, you've just got to die.

You have to die to reputation. Die to your will. Die to what you want to happen in the moment.

Because she knew if you just die and get out of the way, the wind of heaven will blow. This is Calvary talk. And again, this is Christian talk.

How many of you want to follow Jesus? This is what it looks like. I never thought the day would come where I would turn 46. I think Miller and I are the same age.

Seidman is 106. We're catching up to him. Something's been hitting my soul over the last month.

A desire to see your generation pick up the mantle and carry on. You have to. Nothing brings Holy Spirit joy like some good old fashioned opposition.

Nothing. It's not human joy. Nothing brings the power of the Spirit as people who aren't convinced of their own strength.

That's why that young man was saying earlier, we need Jesus. We need you Lord. We need Jesus.

That was prophetic. Miller grabbed me before that and said, we're praying, Jesus we need you. That's greatness.

Greatness is the confession of need not the convincing of arrival. You get with God long enough. He'll go after your strength.

He said something through Paul. He says, Paul writes, I asked God three times I pleaded with him, deliver me from this thorn in the flesh. And the Lord told Paul, my grace is sufficient for you.

And Paul connected that struggle to God's work of humility in Paul. One of the reasons, help me David would you? Just a pat. One of the reasons, something Paul I should say understood is because of the great revelations God gave him.

He knew it was possible to puff up. This goes for Michael and Larissa. It goes for the worship community.

It goes for Chris and Tara. It goes for anyone here who's leading anything and has received anything from God. You can puff up over what God has given you.

And you don't glory in the Lord, but you begin to glory in what he's given you. God through his mercy tries to keep you from going there. So he allows messengers of Satan to be thorns in the flesh.

It's the goodness of God. And then Paul says this, he says, I'm discovering that in my own weakness, the weakness that this is producing in me, that his strength is being made perfect. I want to prophetically call tonight to this house here at Upper Room, to everyone watching and who will watch.

I'm calling the humble, weak cross carriers to arise to take up that tree and allow the tree to, in the most beautiful way, beat them down until only Jesus shines. It's not easy, but we need it. We need to be softened.

We need to be more merciful, slower to anger, more quick to forgive, more patient with people who just don't know. We need to be more like Jesus who can look at those who are causing Him the most horrific pain and say, Father, forgive them. They just don't know what they're doing because there was a day where we didn't know what we were doing.

And God is on a mission with us, guys. He's zealous about the age to come. He's zealous over our conformity into the image of Jesus.

His methods are thorough and oftentimes painful. But we need it. We need it.

We need to offer God the script and say, write the story. Write the story. All I have is yours.

Just have your way in me, Lord. Write the story. I'd rather go through pain than resist the Lord.

We need more tears and less volume, more gentleness and less arguments. Our loving Father looks deep into the recesses of our hearts and our motives. He knows what we're married to and what we're not.

He knows if we're married to our own view of ourselves. Even in a purity culture like this, we can be married to that, that label in and of itself and forsake the beauty of being misunderstood. We defend oftentimes what God never called us to defend.

We're not married to our ideas. We're not married to the ministries the Lord has given us. We are married to Jesus himself.

One day I was writing a song with Stephanie Gretzinger and as we were writing, it was a wild experience writing with Steph. I was just like, wow. She'd be on the floor for 15 minutes worshipping then walk around the room and was praying tongues and get a melody and then scrap the melody and then get half a verse and toss that one and get... I was like, wow, this is like writing with the most glorious tornado-like human I've ever met.

And I'll never forget what Steph said. She goes, we can scrap the verses because we're not married to the song. We're married to Jesus.

And I feel like we need to give the Lord permission to weaken us tonight. Because it's in that weakness that His strength is made perfect. The weak don't run into wars.

Those who are called to build a house for God, they don't want bloodshed on their hands. They're more likely to hide in the Lord than to pick a fight. And the generation that you are part of devalues that, devalues weakness.

But Calvary is not just something Jesus accomplished. Calvary is the greatest declaration of who He is. It's because of that, friends, that He's been given the name above every name.

Therefore, Paul wrote, He has the name above every name at which every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. Tonight I want you to bring your pain to Jesus. You can start right now.

You can close your eyes right there and bring Him the deepest pains of your heart. If you feel like you need to come forward, you're more than welcome. But some of you are in process tonight.

I feel that very strongly. Do not interrupt the process. Let the Lord do His work.

This is not morbid. It's holy. It's sacred.

It's liberating. If you feel like you are carrying a tree that is too heavy for you to carry, I want you to come down tonight. You come right now.

And you've heard the voices say, come down from the cross if you're this or that. I want to invite you tonight to stay on the tree. You're protected from the enemy.

This is the holy life of Jesus, the holy invitation. May it be, Lord. Take away our breath and breathe into us.

If you're suffering tonight and you just don't know why, the Lord is up to something. You come forward as well. And bring your broken heart to Jesus tonight.

Let that wounded heart be like a door for the Lord to walk into. And for Him to love the world through you. Let the wound, let that bleeding be an opening for the love of God to flow.

Pastor Michael, is he here? Father, let's close our eyes and pray. Father, Your ways are higher. They are trustworthy.

And we, we come, Lord, wanting to be like Jesus. And we trust You. For You never leave us and never forsake us.

And as Abraham walked Isaac up that mountain to offer him, we know You walk with us, Holy Father. And as Abraham said to his servants, the lad and I go up to worship. Tonight, Lord, take us up the mountain of death to self, of death to desire, and receive it as worship.

Only walk with us, Father. And be greatly glorified. Lord, I declare a blessing over Upper Room tonight, over Michael, over Larissa, their children and their team.

Can we all stand, unless you're up front? Can we all stand? I declare a blessing over them. May the nature of Jesus reside here and in your people. May the gentle heart of Jesus be known.

And may Your glory be known. And raise up a generation here in Dallas and around the world who will keep, who will toe the line and look to You and cling to You, no matter the cost. We all want to stand before the throne and hear, well done, good and faithful servant.

Give us eyes for that day. Let Your holy fire burn in us now that we would know You and love You. Put a limp in Your people.

Give us grace to hold on to You until You touch us. Touch us in our strength. And as Jacob looked upon Esau after he had encountered You and went low and bowed before Esau's feet, may that weakness take us lower.

And teach us, Lord, to be like Jesus. May a blessing rest on Your people in the mighty name of Jesus.

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