SELF-DENIAL

By Annie M. Knott

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**THE** dictionaries give a rather limited definition of self-denial, such as, "denying one's self; self-sacrifice." It would, however, be conceded by all thoughtful people that self-denial is a Christian virtue which is given great prominence in the teaching and practice of Christ Jesus, who said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." He also bade his would-be followers to count the cost before they undertook to build on the foundation of Truth. Our revered Leader speaks of the mental condition which is "undisciplined by self-denial and divine Science;" and she tells us that "self-denial, sincerity, Christianity, and persistence alone win the prize" (Science and Health, p[p. 221](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=SH+221%3A27-28), [462](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=SH+462%3A17-18)). It is thus seen that self-denial is one of the essential elements of success. It really means that at every step of the way we must make a choice between the fleeting and the enduring, the ignoble and the noble, the unreal and the real, and this choice always involves the denial of self.

Many sincere Christians have unfortunately held very mistaken views respecting the denial of self. They have believed that there was something meritorious in giving up that which is desirable and good without having any ethical reason for so doing. In other words, they believed that self-inflicted deprivation of some sort might be good for them and bring a future reward in a rather uncertain heaven. Now Science teaches that we should not give up what is good, unless it be to gain what is better. Here it should be remembered that the personal and material sense of good is limited and faulty at its best, hence the need of constant self-denial that a larger, truer, and more spiritual concept of good may be attained. That which is selfish is ever false and fleeting, and like the old covenant of material sacrifices, it is "ready to vanish away."

It goes without saying that the student of Christian Science must deny "daily" the false sense of selfhood which was never born of God, and which results in sin, disease, and death ; and this ofttimes means the taking up of the cross. But the student must make his self-denial a practical thing. If he begins the day with a declaration of spiritual being and the government of divine law, he cannot ignore the demands of Love and justice or trample upon the rights of others in the working out of his own human problem. He must not allow selfishness to hinder him from taking a full share of the work to be done, either in the home or the place of business, or to ignore his obligations in any wise. For instance, one may desire to purchase something for which he cannot pay, and if he allows self to dictate he may even take the name of Truth in vain,—say that he is overcoming limitation,—when in fact he is putting the burden of an unpaid debt upon a brother. If he but knew it, he would find in the temptation to incur the debt an opportunity to deny self and obey the demands of Principle, and by so doing he would advance greatly his own best interests, for he would find that by self-denial on the material plane he would gain in spiritual riches, in honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, love for others, and consequent self-respect.

It is good to stand mentally before the mirror of divine Science, and see whether we reflect the perfect model, the Christ-ideal. If we behold flaws where perfection should appear, we can begin to remedy the defect by obedience to the demand of our Master, to deny self and bring out in thought, word, and deed the reflection of Truth and Love.

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