

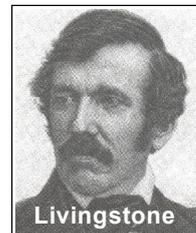
Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30)

We are called to be like John the Baptist who burnt himself out to shine for God (Jn 5:35). We desire to shine for Jesus but we are not ready to burn out for Him. We want to be like electric bulbs; but God is looking for candles, which melt away in the process of giving light. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) burnt out for God in his missionary service in China. He challenged the Christians, “God is looking for some wicks to burn. The oil and the fire are free!” Bearing of the Cross and dying to self are not an one-day affair. It’s a lifetime exercise. Apostle Paul summarized his life of self-denial in 2 Corinthians 6:9,10, “Not I but Christ!” He testified, “We are well known, but we are treated as unknown. We live close to death, but here we are, still alive ... We own nothing, and yet we have everything!”

Evangelist D. L. Moody (1837-1899) was honest when he confessed, “I have more trouble with D.L. Moody than with any man I ever met!” Self-denial is the supreme sacrifice. It means saying “no” to the self-gratifying desires of the flesh, to the self-promoting appeals of the world, and to the self-feeding temptations of the devil (1 Jn 2:15,16). Every act of self-denial takes us forward in Christian life. As a man goes down in self he goes up in God. Unless I decrease, Christ in me cannot increase!

If we follow Jesus, we must be ready to face literal scorn on the road to eventual martyrdom. From the moment of faith believers must count their lives forfeit for the Kingdom. Jesus was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem. We are also called to “go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb 13:12,13). One has to work against internal and external forces if he should keep on witnessing. Church history, why, even the world history, will be only blank pages if we remove the word “sacrifice” from them. David Livingstone (1813-1873) had to singlehandedly bury his wife in the dark Continent of Africa where he had gone as a missionary-explorer. William Carey (1761-1834), who came as a missionary and Bible translator to Bengal in India, had to perform the last rites for his wife all by himself. Such lamps of sacrifice are still burning!



*Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning;
Give me oil in my lamp, I pray;
Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning;
Keep me burning till the break of day!*

Gracious Heavenly Father,

We thank You for creating Adam and Eve to show forth Your glory. Thank You for choosing Noah to proclaim Your message. Thank You for calling Abraham to bless the world. Thank You for commissioning the people of Israel to show forth Your praise. Thank You for sending Prophets to warn the world. Thank You for separating Priests to lead Your people in worship. Thank You for appointing Kings to rule Your people. Thank You for sending Jesus to manifest Yourself. Thank You for saving us and sanctifying us to witness for You. O what a privilege to be vessels of honour in Your hands!

Father God, we confess our failure in shining for You in this world of darkness. Forgive us our foolishness in our desire to *shine* for You without a willingness to *burn* out for You. Our selfishness works against Your call for self-denial. Our love of comfort blocks us from taking up the daily cross. Our attachment to the world prevents us from moving forward for You. Our lack of faith on the glorious future paralyses us from venturing for Your Kingdom. Our indifference to the suffering and the sorrowful stiffens us from bending down to lift them.

Thank You, dear Lord, for the Pioneer Missionaries who are risking their lives in jungles, hills and dangerous places for Your Gospel. We pray that You grant them daily grace and strength to maintain their enthusiasm. We thank You for their spouses and family members who support them in their task. We come to You, dear Lord, for the bereaved families of those martyred for Your cause. You are the God of the widows and the fatherless. We pray that we the Christian community play a substantial supportive role to these families which have sustained a mournful loss.

Dear Lord, we feel sorry for the lack of challenge among our youngsters in our Churches and congregations. Raise from among us apostolic leaders like Paul who can challenge us with questions like, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" We pray that our Pastors and Leaders labour to bring back into our Churches the missionary vision that prevailed in the early Church. Forgive us for choosing easy alternatives in missionary enterprise. Give us, O God, the heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd who is worried more about the one lost sheep than the nintynine safe ones. In His Name, Amen!

(Gen 1:26,27,31; 12:1-3; 2 Pet 2:5; Isa 43:21; Jn 1:18; 5:35; Rev 1:6; 1 Sam 12:11-14; Heb 5:4; Neh 9:26; 2 Tim 2:20,21; Mt 5:16; 10:37,38; Lk 9:23; 14:27; 15:4; Lam 3:22; Psa 68:5; Rom 10:14)