

Age of Self

Intro: Two sermons in one: summary of week; optimistic outlook.

1. The Age of Self

A. Society has made us less dependent upon community to survive. We have the means to indulge ourselves, focus on selves, please selves.

1. To what degree shall I concentrate on, serve myself? To point of hurting others? Defying authority (parents, school)? Disobeying God?
2. James/John demonstrate “me first” attitude: Mt 20:20ff. *“We are able.”*
3. “The rules don’t apply to me” mentality. Lack of team/community attitudes in local churches. **Illus:** Exceptions Bible class age categorization.

B. Examples of selflessness:

1. Jesus modeled: *“Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor”* (2 Cor 8:9); equality with God not held at all costs (Ph 2:5-11). Objection: But God restored Him to former position. Yes, but doesn’t He promise same to us? Temporary self-denial for eternal weight of glory?
2. Paul: Sacrificed Jewish “career track,” ties, income, comfort, etc. for ridicule, beatings, imprisonment, shipwreck, slander, abandonment by brethren, etc. *“Servant to all ... all things to all men”* (1 Cor 9:19ff); *“not seeking my own profit”* (10:33).
3. We admire such in Jesus/Paul, but who has the courage, initiative to adopt such a philosophy for him/herself?

C. Jesus boldly and directly challenges us: *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me”* (Mt 16:24). Purely selfish pursuits are hollow and vain; they do not bring happiness.

2. The Battle Is Won!

A. Lessons have warned about threats, evil influences around us. We are fighting a spiritual war that has eternal implications.

1. *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Tim 6:12).
2. *“You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”* (2 Tim 2:3-4).

3. Armor/weapons issued: Eph 6:10-18; 2 Cor 10:4-5.

B. The outcome of the battle has been decided – Jesus and His army wins! **Illus:**
We may not want to know the outcome of the game; suspense. But when our eternal welfare is at stake, we want assurance!

1. *“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord”* (1 Cor 15:57).

2. *“And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith”* (1 Jn 5:4).

3. *“In all these things we are more than conquerors ...”* (Rom 8:35-37).

C. We have a decision to make, a decision for the ages:

Not: Do I want to be in this war? *In it already.*

But: Whose side am I on?

Conclusion: Ph 2:14-15 – We must be *“children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”*

1. The hope for the future is not in religious gimmickry, smarmy emotionalism, unwarranted personal attacks or any other carnal approaches.
2. The hope lies in men and women of genuine faith, thorough knowledge of God’s word, undivided loyalty to the Lord who died for them.
3. Such will make for strong congregations which will produce fruitful teachers, sound evangelists and conscientious, wise elders.