

Your Own Way

#0169

Study Given by W. D. Frazee

Let us turn to Isaiah 53:5–6; these words of the Gospel prophet, we see the sufferings of the Messiah described hundreds of years before He was born.

“...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isaiah 53:5–6.

I’ve been meditating on that expression, “We have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” The modern phraseology today is everybody doing his own thing. The prophet here points out that this is what made necessary the death of Jesus—each one of us doing his own thing.

Sometimes, when you and I go to town, we see something that we think we want until we see the price tag. Then we decide we don’t want it. Have you ever had that experience? There is something very alluring, very intriguing, very enticing about having our own way. But when you and I see the price tag on that, we may have second thoughts.

The prophet suggests that there is more than one way to have one’s own way.

“...all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...” Isaiah 53:6.

A hundred people may have a hundred ways to have their own way. Some like this and some don’t like it. Some like that, but some don’t like that at all. We have turned everyone to *his own way*. This is at the root of sin. But while there is individuality in these various patterns of having our own way, they fall more or less into three great categories; I’d like to look at them with you for a little while tonight.

The first is the way of open rebellion—my own way. I, a creature, will shake my puny fist at the God of Heaven, and say, “I want my way, and I’m going to have it.”

This was the way of Nimrod at the tower of Babel. This was the way of Pharaoh as he withstood Moses and Aaron there at the time of the Exodus—He perished in the Red Sea. This was the way of Belshazzar as he assembled his lords and drank that fermented wine of Babylon, and praised the gods of silver and gold, and defied the God of Heaven by calling for the sacred vessels from the temple of

Jerusalem to be brought in for the service of these heathen gods. All these, and millions of others, in turning each one to his own way have openly defied the God of Heaven. This is what we usually think of in rebellion.

There is another way of having one's own way. We'll need the help of the Holy Spirit to see through this in all its disguises, its camouflage. This way of having one's own way is the way of pretended loyalty. It does not defy God; it seeks to evade His requirements, all the while *pretending* to be loyal. This is the way of King Saul, the first monarch of Israel.

Turn to 1 Samuel 15; I want you to notice this experience of the young king. The prophet had anointed him with holy oil. He'd been crowned king. And as one of the directions from God, he received the instructions from the spirit of prophecy to go exterminate the Amalekites—a cruel, presumptuous, evil people that had been defying God for hundreds of years. They filled up their cup of iniquity. Through the spirit of prophecy, God gave him direct instructions on what should be done and how it should be done. All that idol worship and all who shared in it were to be destroyed. The people weren't even to participate in the spoils. It was to be clear that they were acting as God's sheriffs, God's executioners. They were not to take any of it for themselves.

Well, they got over and the job was done. But there came the thought, "Why lose all these flocks and herds, and all this booty." They began to reason. Wouldn't it be fine to sacrifice this to the Lord at the tabernacle in Gilgal? Under their breath they said, "This will save our own cattle, we can use these to sacrifice instead of our own, and so we'll have more." Also, King Saul had second thoughts about sparing Agag. He was the worse one of all to be spared. But King Saul thought, "If I take him and bring home, this will heighten my triumph when they see this heathen king in chains." So putting it all together, they came home.

Samuel met them, the prophet of God.

He said, "Why haven't you obeyed what God said?"

Saul said, "I have."

Samuel said, "Then what is this sound that I hear, what's this bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen. Where is all that coming from?"

"Oh," the King said, "The people have spared those to sacrifice to the Lord thy God in Gilgal."

I want you to notice Samuel's response:

"And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?" 1 Samuel 15:22.

Loyalty is shown not by pretense, not by profession, not even by sacrifices, but by what? Obedience. Jesus echoed it a thousand years later:

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” John 14:15.

“...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king” 1 Samuel 15:22–23.

So the spirit of prophecy pierced through his disguises, he camouflages, his excuses, his rationalization.

I used to hear a friend of mine say, “People quite often have two reasons for what they do. The reason they give, and the real reason.”

King Saul had two reasons. He had the reason that he gave, which was an excuse, and the real reason. My point is God called it what? Rebellion, stubbornness. Yet Saul was claiming to be a loyal supporter of the Lord, a loyal subject of God’s kingdom, a loyal commander in God’s army all the while he was doing this. But God called what he was doing what? Rebellion, stubbornness. Did he have his own way? Oh, yes. But he was pretending it was God’s way.

Turn please to Matthew 7. Here in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ strips the disguise and exposes the camouflage of those who claim to speak in His name but do not keep the commandments of His Father.

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” Matthew 7:21.

That word translated “iniquity” there comes from a word meaning “lawlessness.” In other words, rebellion, transgressing God’s law

Yet, these people, mind you, are not like Pharaoh in open rebellion. They were not like Belshazzar, blaspheming the name of God. They take the name of Jesus upon their lips. They repeat His praises—all that they do, they do in *His* name. And yet, Jesus says they’re in rebellion. Why? They’re not obedient.

Oh my friend, you can see that this method of doing one’s own way is far more subtle than the first. The open sinner, the bold rebel, there may be hope in his finding that he needs to be changed and converted. This happens again and again, thank God. The arrow from the Lord’s quiver wounds such a heart. But oh, what a deceptive trap it is to be taken in when one practices the forms of religion and sings the praises of God, but in his inner life is following his own way.

There are many variations on this tune. Oh friends, it's a wonderful thing when we choose to renounce our own way instead of seeking to find excuses for it, rationalization for it.

This was the problem with Judas. Christ gave Judas an opportunity to be converted. Judas went through all the forms. He joined in prayer. He was even ordained a minister by Jesus Himself. He was sent out along with the rest of the 12 to work miracles, to preach and heal in Jesus' name. But deep in his heart, Judas never came to the point of full surrender.

Turn over to John 12:4–6. This is a classic example of this matter of doing something for the reason of having one's own way, but giving a different reason for it.

John 12 begins with the story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus at that feast in Simon's house. As that box of alabaster was broken, and as the ointment filled the room, and Judas saw that ointment on the head and feet of Jesus and saw what was happening, his selfish, covetous soul rose up in protest against that. He thought, "Oh my, think of all that money, that cost; if it could have been sold and the money put into the treasury. I'm the treasurer, and think what I could do with it." But did he tell his fellow disciples what he *would* do with it? Oh no. Notice what he said:

"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" John 12:5.

But notice how John, by inspiration writing later, tears aside the pretense.

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" John 12:6.

He was pretending you see—pretending worthy motives, unselfish motives. But really what he was trying to do was get a chance to do what? Steal! Steal! And right there in the presence of Christ, he dared to condemn that act of love on Mary's part, and give his objection a worthy look. Why, he was being careful. He was looking after the poor. He wasn't improvident. He wasn't wasteful. Judas wanted everybody to know that he was a keen, shrewd, careful, loyal supporter of Jesus and His program and looking after His interest in the kingdom. Interestingly enough, the disciples all sided with Judas, not with Mary. Only the *Savior* saw through the disguise. Only the Savior could read the heart.

And my dear friend, if there's a soul here tonight that is following your own way, a wicked way, a selfish way, a covetous way, a lustful way, and yet you are covering it up, God knows your heart. Don't forget that God knows your heart. How dangerous it is to cling to sin, covering it up. Jesus referred to some of the scribes and Pharisees as whited sepulchers. Inside full of dead men's bones, but covered over with whitewash on the outside.

Now, there's a third way of having your own way. This is far more insidious than the second way I told you about. What's this? It's not the path of doing the wrong thing like Judas did, the thief. No, no. It's doing the right thing for the wrong

reason. And here we shall find an example not in Judas, but in the experience of James and John.

Turn please to Luke 9:49.

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbid him, because he follows not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us” Luke 9:49–50.

Now following that is still another experience. He’s on His way to Jerusalem, He’s going to a village of the Samaritans on His way to Jerusalem, and James and John ask the Samaritans if they could stay there that night, but because they saw that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, they wouldn’t receive Him. Notice the 54th verse:

“...James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them...” Luke 9:54–56.

James and John were not crooks like Judas. They thought they were being loyal to the Master. They weren’t in an underhanded way trying to undermine His influence. But (watch) their selfish human nature had seized upon the opportunity of getting close to Christ and upholding Him as a way to exalt themselves and get their way. It could be a temptation for you and me. So when they saw somebody else doing some work in Jesus’ name, full of zeal they said, “No, you mustn’t do this. You’re not with our company. You’re not taking your orders from us, so you had better quit.”

The book *Desire of Ages*, in commenting upon this, gives us this interesting ray of light: That James and John had thought they were ambitious for their Master’s honor, but as Christ instructed them, they began to see that they had been ambitious for their own honor. What was it they wanted? Their own way. Now their own way happened to be right in exalting Jesus. But the way they went at it was a way to exalt who? Themselves.

Again, with the Samaritans, they went ahead, and Jesus told them to try to find lodging and something to eat, but the Samaritans wouldn’t receive them. So they came back and reported and said, “Now Lord, shall we call fire down from Heaven and burn them up like Elijah did?” Jesus looked upon them sadly, and He said as we read here: “You do not know what spirit you are of. You think you’re trying to help Me. You mean all right. But really, the matter is, the trouble is that you want your own way. You want to rule or ruin. You want people to jump when you crack the whip, and if they won’t do it, you’re prepared to use the whip—worse, to burn them up.”

This is at the foundation of all the persecution in the name of religion down through the ages. Millions of inquisitors and persecutors have put to death tens of

millions of conscientious souls in the name of Jesus Christ. Why? They were working for God. And my dear friend,—don't miss it—even when the thing we stand for is the right position, we still may be very selfish in the way we stand for it.

I think of some of those church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era when Bishops of the church gathered together to debate such subjects as the nature of Christ. By the way, there're still some debates on that. And do you know that some of those Bishops actually engaged in hand to hand combat, one with another right there in the church councils? What for? Why they were standing up for Christ! Onward Christian soldiers, as if a theological question could be decided by fistfights. What a sad thing, my friends. What a sad thing.

So, I repeat, the most insidious way, the most subtle way of having your own way is to seize the right thing to stand for, but do it for the wrong reason. The wrong reason is to have your own way, to please your selfish self.

We're in an interesting age when it has become popular on many fronts to cry out against the establishment, to point out the mistakes in government, in schools, in homes, in the church. And God knows there are plenty of mistakes, aren't there? But I want to tell you something, friends. Whether I riot in the streets, or burn down the administration building, or choose more subtle ways to show my disregard of authority; whether I smoke marijuana and point out that it's no worse than my elders getting drunk with whiskey, or whether I select a righteous cause and stand for it in the spirit of rebellion, the end result is the same—I'm turning to my own way.

When a young person today selects a righteous cause, and does it in defiance of his parents, his teachers, and points out their sins and mistakes, only God knows the motive of his heart. But I challenge each of you young people, be sure when you take a stand in advance of your elders, be sure you're doing the right thing for the right reason instead of the right thing for the wrong reason. It makes all the difference in the world. One road leads to Heaven, and the other leads to hell.

All the people that burn in hell will not be the people who got drunk in this world, or got high on drugs. Selfishness is something far more permeating in its influence than that. There are ten thousand forms that selfishness can take. So the prophet says truly when he says: "All we like sheep have gone astray." *All* of us, every one of us.

Some of us have taken the road of open, defiant rebellion. Some of us have taken the road of pretending to be loyal to God, and yet in our hearts, we are thieves, crooks, lustful deceivers; yet covering it over with whitewash. And some of us have taken the road of seizing the right cause, the right action, the truth, and using *it* as a platform on which to mount, to exalt ourselves, a throne from which to issue edicts, and expect them to be carried out because *we* are standing for Jesus.

Thank God, there is a fourth way to have your own way. We'll find it in Matthew 16. You notice, I said, "Thank God." There's something better than these three ways in which like sheep, men go astray. Here's another way:

“Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” Matthew 16:24.

This is not the way of open rebellion. It is not the way of evading and rationalizing. It is not the way of choosing truth and doing the right thing for the wrong reason. This is another way entirely. It's the way of the cross—the way Jesus took. But my dear friends, Jesus did not come to the earth to give up bad things so He could be saved. He gave up all the good things so you and I can be saved. He invites us to join with Him in that way, the way of self-crucifixion.

Our opening text was Galatians 2:20. Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ.” He had seen Christ on the Damascus road as the crucified Savior, now risen and ascended, pleading with him, Saul the persecutor, to turn from self-pleasing in the name of religion, and He said, “I will show you what great things you must suffer for My name's sake.” Thank God, Paul turned his back on all the self-pleasing in the name of religion, and took up the cross of Christ and carried it to his death. Didn't he? And he said, “God forbid that I should glory, save in that cross.”

You say, “But Brother Frazee, I thought you said that this was the way to have your own way.” It is. It's the only way that works. That's the paradox.

I saw some ducks on the lake the other day. As we were watching them eat their dinner, while we ate our dinner, we observed how much better they functioned there in the water than we would if we'd been going after our dinner where they were. Do you know why they were doing such a good job of it? They were made for that; they were equipped for that from head to tail.

You and I were not made to have our own way; we were not made for that at all. And whenever we try it, sooner or later we're disappointed. We were made for God's way. We were made to please Him. He says: “This people have I formed for myself that should show forth my praise.” And when you and I turn from self-pleasing, and see Jesus on the cross, and say, “Lord, if you love me that much to *die* for me, I love You enough to *live* for You.” When we do that, then we begin to understand and experience a joy which is not the joy of self-pleasing. It's the joy of pleasing Him who died for us. Who loved me and gave Himself for me. And since it is what we were made for, it works. As one of old said: “Thou hast made us for thyself O, God; our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”

Nothing but Jesus, having full possession of our hearts can truly satisfy the soul. We'll never find satisfaction in defiance of God in open rebellion. We'll find only disappointment and disillusionment in trying to pretend loyalty to Him, and yet really having our own selfish way. And oh, the sad, sad disillusionment of those who take a righteous cause and march under its banner, all the while trying to find their own way in the religion of Christ. No, friends. Let's make one big pile of all our selfish ways and thoughts and plans and turn from it, and come to Jesus on the cross, and kneel down and give Him everything we have. There's no other way.

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” When we do that, more and more while we crucify the flesh, while

we deny the selfish cravings, we become acquainted with a life which finds its satisfaction in pleasing God, and in helping Him to make others happy. Jesus said, "If you know these things, miserable you'll be if you do them." Did He say that? What did He say? Did he say happy? Is that what is says? Where is that? John 13:17:

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"
John 13:17.

Oh yes, to turn from self-pleasing means to enter the road that eventually will bring us eternal joy here and hereafter. So the psalmist says:

"Delight thyself also in the LORD: and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" Psalm 37:4.

Do you want your heart's desire? You will not get it by going after it. You'll not find it by chasing it. There is only one way that you can find the real fulfillment, the answer to your quest. It's by renouncing self and letting Jesus have full control of your life.

I pray that if tonight the disguise of sin and selfishness has been torn away from any of the Devil's plans, in any mind or heart here tonight, I pray that we'll not merely be illumined; I hope we'll come to a decision. I hope we'll say with Paul on the Damascus road, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

[The Appeal]

Now, friends. Wouldn't you like to make Jesus happy? He calls for a decision. So I'd like to ask a few questions here tonight. My first question is: Is there somebody here that realizes that you've been in open rebellion against God, but tonight you want to turn from your way and come to Jesus and accept His way with all your heart? Will you stand up right where you are?

All right. Now I have another question: If there is somebody here that recognizes that you're in the second group I talked about tonight. That you've been doing the wrong things but you've been finding excuses; you've been doing the wrong things, but you've been hunting for ways to explain those wrong things, excuse them, rationalize them, and you see that instead of choosing God's way you've been choosing your own way, and yet you've been trying to pretend, to cover up. If there's somebody like that that will tonight turn from your own way, come clear through. Don't be like Judas. Come with all your soul and say, "Lord, I'm tired of this double life. I'm tired of deception. I'm tired of studying to find ways to excuse and defend my wrong action." Is there somebody like that; just stand up, will you?

Thank God, He's working with hearts, and as you stand there just bow your heads and close your eyes. Forget this audience. There's a radio between earth and Heaven, and you're tuned in right now. Talk to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you; oh, He will. He'll accept you.

Now I have another question: Is there somebody here tonight that as you listened to the spirit of God and you feel you were in that third class that I talked about tonight—you've been doing the right thing but for the wrong reason. You may have espoused some reform—health reform, dress reform, Sabbath reform, or anything else—but as you look into your heart tonight, you feel that, like James and John, you've been doing the right thing for the wrong reason. You've found in that an opportunity to exhibit your selfish desire to domineer, to dictate, to order people around, to get a position for yourself. Maybe you got it; maybe you just got sour trying to get it. But if there's somebody that in the name of religion and in the services of religion, you've seen that you've been really trying to find your own way and you want to turn from that tonight, will you stand?

Oh, I am so glad that Jesus is our Priest.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”
1 John 1:9.

Now, dear ones, remember this: We've repudiated our own way here tonight, haven't we? We've chosen Jesus' way. The good news is God accepts us now, through Christ, as if we had never sinned. Remember that text we read at the opening? He was wounded for what? Our transgression. He takes our whipping, He took our crucifixion, He took our death. He took what we deserved so we can have what He deserves. Let's accept what He deserves now—the Father's smile and acceptance. What do you say?

And let me tell you, as we go out from this chapel, as we go to bed tonight, as we get up tomorrow, we may feel the cravings of the flesh, we may feel the temptations of Satan, we may feel the luring power of sin, but let us not think that means we've failed or been defeated. We have not failed until we accept our way as the way of our choice. No matter how much the flesh clamors, as long as we say, “Dear Lord, I don't want my way, I want Your way” we're on the winning side.” Isn't that good news? And that's what we're doing.

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee with all our hearts tonight that the Dear Savior was willing to be whipped, beaten, spit upon, mocked, crucified that we might be saved from following our own way to the end. And tonight, as we see what sin did to Him, we see what it will do to us if we stick with sin. But as we see what love led Him to do for us, we want to be like Him instead of having our own way.

We thank Thee for the good news that we can be changed. So tonight we come, we're giving up our way and taking Jesus' way.

We thank Thee, that as we give up our sins, He takes them. As He offers us His righteousness, we take it. Send us out now to share the good news with others. We ask it in His dear name, amen.

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