

Articles and Sermons :: CLASSIC BOOK: True Discipleship by William MacDonald**CLASSIC BOOK: True Discipleship by William MacDonald - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/24 0:14**[Image: http://www.plymouthbrethren.org/assets/jpegs_and_gifs/truediscipleship.jpg]**True Discipleship***by: William MacDonald*

Foreword

This booklet is an attempt to set forth some principles of New Testament discipleship. Some of us have seen these principles in the Word for years, but somehow concluded that they were too extreme and impractical for the complicated age in which we live. And so we surrendered to the chill of our spiritual environment.

Then we met a group of young believers who set out to demonstrate that the Savior's terms of discipleship are not only highly practical but that they are the only terms which will ever result in the evangelization of the world.

We acknowledge our indebtedness to these young people for providing living examples of many of the truths set forth here.

To the extent that these truths are still beyond our own personal experience, we set forth as the aspirations of our heart.

—William MacDonald

Introduction

The pathway to true discipleship begins when a person is born again. It begins when the following events take place:

1. When a person realizes that he is sinful, lost, blind and naked before God.
2. When he acknowledges that he cannot save himself by good character or good works.
3. When he believes that the Lord Jesus Christ died as his Substitute on the Cross.
4. When by a definite decision of faith, he acknowledges Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior.

This is how a person becomes a Christian. It is important to emphasize this at the outset. Too many people think that you become a Christian by living a Christian life. NOT at all! You must first become a Christian before you can live the Christian life.

The life of discipleship outlined in the following pages is a supernatural life. We do not have the power in ourselves to live it. We need divine power. Only when we are born again do we receive the strength to live as Jesus taught.

Before reading any further, ask yourself the question, "Have I ever been born again? Have I become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus?"

If you have not, receive Him now as your Lord and Savior. Then determine to obey Him in all that He has commanded, whatever the cost may be.

—William MacDonald

The Terms Of Discipleship

True Christianity is an all-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Savior is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to Him—or their weekends—or their years of retirement. Rather He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives. “He looks today, as He has ever looked, not for crowds drifting aimlessly in His track, but for individual men and women whose undying allegiance will spring from their having recognized that He wants those who are prepared to follow the path of self-renunciation which He trod before them”—H. A. Evan Hopkins.

Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our souls, our lives, our all.

The Lord Jesus made stringent demands on those who would be His disciples—demands that are all but overlooked in this day of luxury living. Too often we look upon Christianity as an escape from hell and a guarantee of heaven. Beyond that, we feel that we have every right to enjoy the best that this life has to offer. We know that there are those strong verses on discipleship in the Bible, but we have difficulty reconciling them with our ideas of what Christianity should be.

We can accept the fact that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons. We do not think it strange that Communists give their lives for political reasons. But that “blood, sweat and tears” should characterize the life of a follower of Christ somehow seems remote and hard to grasp.

And yet the words of the Lord Jesus are clear enough. There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Here are the terms of discipleship as laid down by the Savior of the world:

1. A supreme love for Jesus Christ.

“If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). This does not mean that we should ever have animosity or ill-will in our hearts toward our relatives, but it does mean that our love to Christ should be so great that all other loves are hated by comparison. Actually, the most difficult clause in this passage is the expression, “yea, and his own life also.” Self-love is one of the stubbornest hindrances to discipleship. Not until we are willing to lay down our very lives for Him are we in the place where He wants us.

2. A denial of self.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself...” (Matthew 16:24). Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. The latter means foregoing certain foods, pleasures, or possessions. But denial of self means such complete submission to the lordship of Christ that self has no rights or authority at all. It means that self abdicates the throne. It is expressed in the words of Henry Martyn, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will.”

My glorious Victor, Prince divine,
Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine,
At length my will is all thine own,
Glad vassals of a Savior’s throne.

H. G. C. Moule

3. A deliberate choosing of the cross.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross...” (Matthew 16:24). The cross is not some physical infirmity or mental anguish; these things are common to all men. The cross is a pathway that is deliberately chosen. It is “a path which so far as this world goes is one of dishonor and reproach”—C. A. Coates. The cross symbolizes the shame, persecution and abuse which the world heaped upon the Son of God, and which the world will heap on all who choose to stand against the tide. Any believer can avoid the cross simply by being conformed to the world and its ways.

4. A life spent in following Christ.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). To understand what this means, one need simply ask himself, “What characterized the life of the Lord Jesus?” It was a life of obedience.

dience to the will of God. It was a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a life of unselfish service for others. It was a life of patience and longsuffering in the face of the gravest wrongs. It was a life of zeal, of expenditure, of self-control, of meekness, of kindness, of faithfulness and of devotion (Galatians 5:22, 23). In order to be His disciples, we must walk as He walked. We must exhibit the fruit of Christ-likeness (John 15:8).

5. A fervent love for all who belong to Christ.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). This is the love that esteems others better than oneself. It is the love that suffers long and is kind. It vaunts not itself and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly; seeks not its own, is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Without this love, discipleship would be a cold, legalistic asceticism.

6. An unswerving continuance in His Word.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31). For real discipleship there must be continuance. It is easy enough to start well, to burst forth in a blaze of glory. But the test of reality is endurance to the end. Any man who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Spasmodic obedience to the Scriptures will not do. Christ wants those who will follow Him in constant, unquestioning obedience.

Keep me from turning back.
The handles of my plough with tears are wet,
The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet,
My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.

7. A forsaking of all to follow Him.

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). This is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ’s terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says, but simple disciples drink it down eagerly, assuming that the Lord Jesus knew what He was saying. What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one’s material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the gospel. The man who forsakes all does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for the current necessities of his family and himself. But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ, he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord and leaves the future with God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he believes that he will never lack food and clothing. He cannot conscientiously hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for want of the gospel. He does not want to waste his life accumulating riches that will fall into the devil’s hands when Christ returns for His saints. He wants to obey the Lord’s injunction against laying up treasure on earth. In forsaking all, he offers what he cannot keep anyway, and what he has ceased to love.

These then are the seven terms of Christian discipleship. They are clear and unequivocal. The writer realizes that in the act of setting them forth, he has condemned himself as an unprofitable servant. But shall the truth of God be forever suppressed because of the failure of God’s people? Is it not true that the message is always greater than the messenger? Is it not proper that God be true and every man a liar? Should we not say with an old worthy, “Thy will be done though in my own undoing.”

Confessing our past failure, let us courageously face up to the claims of Christ upon us and seek henceforth to be true disciples of our glorious Lord.

My Master, lead me to Thy door:
Pierce this now willing ear once more,
Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay
With thee to toil, endure, obey.

H. G. C. Moule

Forsaking All

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, one must forsake all. This is the unmistakable meaning of the words of the Savior. No matter how much we might object to such an “extreme” demand, no matter how much we might rebel against such an “impossible” and “unwise” policy, the fact remains that this is the Word of the Lord, and He means what He says.

At the outset, we should face these unbending truths:

1. Jesus did not make this demand of a certain, select class of Christian workers. He said, “Whosoever he be of you...”
2. He did not say that we must simply be willing to forsake all. He said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not...”
3. He did not say that we must forsake only a part of our wealth. He said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath...”
4. He did not say that a diluted form of discipleship would be possible for the man who holds on to his treasures. Jesus said, “...he cannot be my disciple.”

Actually, we should not be surprised at this absolute demand, as if it were the only such suggestion in the Bible.

Did Jesus not say:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...” (Matthew 6:19, 20)?

As Wesley justly said, “To lay up treasure on earth is as plainly forbidden by our Master as adultery and murder.”

Did Jesus not say:

“Sell that ye have, and give alms...” (Luke 12:33)?

Did He not instruct the rich young ruler:

“...sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” (Luke 18:22)?

If He did not mean exactly what He said, what then did He mean?

Was it not true of the believers in the early church that they “sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:45)?

And has it not been true of many of God’s saints down through the years that they literally forsook all to follow Jesus?

Anthony Norris Groves and his wife, early missionaries to Baghdad, became convinced that “they must cease to lay up treasure on earth, and that they should devote the whole of a very substantial income...to the Lord’s service.”¹ Groves’ convictions on this subject are set forth in his booklet, CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.²

C. T. Studd “decided to give his entire fortune to Christ, and to take the golden opportunity offered him of doing what the rich young man had failed to do....It was simple obedience to the black and white statements of God’s Word.”³ After distributing thousands to the work of the Lord, he reserved the equivalent of \$9,588 for his new bride. She was not to be outdone by her husband. “Charlie,” she asked, “what did the Lord tell the rich young man to do?”

“Sell all,” he replied.

“Well then, we will start clear with the Lord at our wedding.” And off went the money to Christian missions.

The same spirit of devotedness animated Jim Elliot. He wrote in his diary:

“Father, let me be weak that I might lose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions, Lord, let me loose the tension of the grasping hand. Even, Father, would I lose the love of fondling. How often I have released a grasp only to retain what I prized by “harmless” longing, the fondling touch. Rather, open my hand to receive the nail of Calvary, as Christ’s was opened—that I, releasing all, might be released, unleashed from all that binds me now. He thought Heaven, yea, equality with God, not a thing to be clutched at. So let me release my grasp.”

Our infidel hearts tell us that it would be impossible to take the words of the Lord literally. If we forsook all, we would starve. After all, we must make provision for our own future and the future of our loved ones. If every Christian forsook all, then who would finance the work of the Lord? And if there were not some Christians who were wealthy, then how could the higher class of people ever be reached with the gospel? And so the arguments come pouring forth in quick succession—all to prove that the Lord Jesus could not have meant what He said.

The fact of the matter is that obedience to the Lord’s command is the most sane and reasonable life and the one that yields the greatest joy. The witness of Scripture and of experience testifies that no one who lives sacrificially for Christ will ever suffer want. When a man obeys God, the Lord takes care of him.

The man who forsakes all to follow Christ is not a shiftless pauper who expects to be supported by his fellow Christians.

1. He is industrious. He works diligently for the supply of his current necessities and those of his family.
2. He is frugal. He lives as economically as possible so that everything above immediate needs can be put into the Lord’s work.
3. He is foresighted. Instead of accumulating wealth on earth, he lays up his treasures in heaven.
4. He trusts God for the future. Instead of giving the best of his life to the building up of vast reserves for old-age security, he gives his best to the service of Christ and trusts Him for the future. He believes that if he seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he will never lack food and clothing (Matthew 6:33).

To him, it is unreasonable to accumulate wealth for a rainy day. He would argue as follows:

1. How can we conscientiously hoard extra funds when the money could be used right now for the salvation of souls? “...whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

“Again, consider the important command—Love thy neighbor as thyself (Leviticus 19:18). Can we, with any truth, be said to love that neighbor as ourselves, whom we allow to starve, when we have enough and to spare? May I not appeal to any who have experienced the joy of knowing the unspeakable gift of God, and ask—“Would you exchange this knowledge...for a hundred worlds?” Let us not then withhold the means by which others may obtain this sanctifying knowledge and heavenly consolation”—A. N. Groves.

2. If we really believe that Christ’s coming is imminent, we will want to put our money to use immediately. Otherwise we run the risk of having it fall into the devil’s hands—money that could have been used for eternal blessing.
3. How can we conscientiously pray to the Lord to provide finances for Christian work when we ourselves have money that we are not willing to use for this purpose? Forsaking all for Christ saves us from hypocrisy in prayer.
4. How can we teach the whole counsel of God to others if there are areas of truth, such as this, which we have failed to obey? Our lives in such a case would seal our lips.
5. Clever men of the world set aside abundant reserves for the future. This is not walking by faith but by sight. The Christian is called to a life of dependence on God. If he lays up treasures on earth, how is he different from the world and its ways?

The argument is frequently heard that we must provide for the future needs of our families; otherwise we are worse than

infidels. The following two verses are used to support this view:

“...the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children (2 Corinthians 12:13).

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

A careful study of these verses will show that they deal with CURRENT NECESSITIES and not with FUTURE CONTINGENCIES.

In the first verse, Paul is using irony. He is the parent, and the Corinthian’s are his children. He did not burden them financially, although he had every right to do so as a servant of the Lord. After all, he was their father in the faith, and parents ordinarily provide for their children, not vice versa. It is not at all a question of parents’ laying up for their children’s future. The whole passage has to do with the supply of Paul’s present needs, not his possible future necessities.

In 1 Timothy 5:8, the apostle is discussing the care of poor widows. He insists that their relatives are responsible to care for them. If there are no relatives or if they fail in their responsibility, then the local church should care for Christian widows. But here again the subject is present needs, not future necessities.

God’s ideal is that the members of the body of Christ should care for the immediate needs of their fellow believers:

“It is a matter of share and share alike. At present your plenty should supply their need, and then at some future date their plenty may supply your need. In that way we share with each other, as the Scripture says, He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack” (2 Corinthians 8:15, Phillips).

A Christian who feels he must provide for future needs faces the difficult problem of knowing how much will be enough. He therefore spends his life in pursuit of a fortune of some indefinite amount and forfeits the privilege of giving his best to the Lord Jesus Christ. He gets to the end of a wasted life and finds out that all his needs would have been provided anyway, if he had just lived wholeheartedly for the Savior.

If all Christians took the words of the Lord Jesus literally, there would be no lack of finances in the Lord’s work. The gospel would go out with increased power and in increased volume. If any particular disciple faced a need, it would be the joy and privilege of other disciples to share whatever they might have.

To suggest that there must be wealthy Christians to reach the wealthy people of the world is absurd. Paul reached Caesar’s household while he was a prisoner (Philippians 4:22). If we obey God, we can trust Him to arrange the details.

The example of the Lord Jesus should be conclusive in the matter. The servant is not above his Master. “It ill becomes the servant to seek to be rich, and great, and honored in this world where his Lord was poor, and mean, and despised” —George Muller.

“The sufferings of Christ included poverty, 2 Corinthians 8:9. Of course, poverty does not necessitate rags and dirt, but it does involve the lack of reserves and of the means to be luxurious...Some thirty years ago...Andrew Murray pointed out that the Lord and His apostles could not have accomplished the work they had to do had they not been actually poor. He who would lift up another must descend, like the Samaritan, and the infinite majority of mankind always have been and still are poor” —A. N. Groves.

People plead that there are certain material possessions that are necessary for home life. That is true.

People plead that Christian businessmen must have a certain amount of capital to carry on a business today. That is true.

People plead that there are other material possessions, such as an automobile, which can be used for God’s glory. That too is true.

But beyond these legitimate necessities, the Christian should live frugally and sacrificially for the spread of the gospel. His motto should be, “Labor hard, consume little, give much—and all to Christ,” A. N. Groves.

Each of us stands responsible to God as to what it means to forsake all. One believer cannot legislate to another; each person must act as a result of his own exercise before the Lord. It is a tremendously personal matter.

If as a result of such exercise, the Lord should lead a believer to a degree of devotedness hitherto unknown, there is no room for personal pride. Any sacrifices we make are no sacrifices at all, when seen in the light of Calvary. Beside all this, we only give to the Lord what we cannot keep anyway and what we have ceased to love.

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”—Jim Elliot.

Hindrances To Discipleship

Anyone who sets out to follow Christ can be sure that many escape routes will loom up before him. He will be given numerous opportunities to turn back. Other voices will call to him, offering to cut inches off the cross. Twelve legions of angels stand ready to deliver him from the path of self-renunciation and sacrifice.

This is remarkably illustrated in the account of three would-be disciples who allowed other voices to take precedence over the voice of Christ.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” And Jesus said unto him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” And he said unto another, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Jesus said unto him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.” And Jesus said unto him, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9: 57-62).

Three unnamed men came face to face with Jesus Christ. They felt an inner compulsion to follow Him. But they permitted something else to come between their souls and complete dedication to Him.

Mr. Too Quick

The first man has been called Mr. Too Quick. He enthusiastically volunteered to follow the Lord anywhere. “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” No cost would be too great. No cross would be too heavy. No path would be too rough.

The Savior’s reply at first seems to have no connection with the willing-hearted offer of Mr. Too Quick. Jesus said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Actually the Lord’s answer was most appropriate. It was as if He said, “You claim to be willing to follow me anywhere, but are you willing to do without the material comforts of life? Foxes have more of this world’s comforts than I have. The birds have a nest they can call their own. But I am a homeless Wanderer in the world my hands have made. Are you willing to sacrifice the security of a home to follow me? Are you willing to forego the legitimate comforts of life in order to serve me devotedly?”

Apparently the man was not willing, because we hear no more of him in the Sacred Scriptures. His love for earthly conveniences was greater than his dedication to Christ!

Mr. Too Slow

The second man has been called Mr. Too Slow. He did not volunteer, like the first man; rather the Savior called him to be a follower. His reply was not an outright refusal. It was not that he was completely disinterested in the Lord. Rather there was something he wanted to do first. This was his great sin. He put his own claims above the claims of Christ. Notice his reply, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.”

Now it is perfectly legitimate for a son to show common respect to his parent. And if a father has died, it is certainly within the bounds of the Christian faith that he should be given a decent burial.

But the legitimate courtesies of life become positively sinful when they take priority over the interests of the Lord Jesus. The real ambition of this man’s life is exposed by his naked request, “Lord, ...me first...” The other words he spoke were mere camouflage to hide his underlying desire to put self first.

Apparently he did not realize that the words "Lord...me first" are a moral absurdity and impossibility. If Christ is Lord, then He must come first. If the personal pronoun "I" is on the throne, then Christ is no longer in control.

Mr. Too Slow had a job to accomplish, and he let this job have first place. It was therefore fitting that Jesus should say to him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." We might paraphrase His words as follows: "There are certain things which the spiritually dead can do just as well as believers. But there are other things in life which only a believer can do. See that you do not spend your life doing what an unconverted man could have done just as well. Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. But as for you—be indispensable. Let the main thrust of your life be to advance my cause on earth."

It seems that the price was too great for Mr. Too Slow to pay. He passes off the stage of time into a nameless silence.

If the first man illustrated material comforts as a hindrance to discipleship, the second might speak of a job or an occupation taking precedence over the main reason for a Christian's existence. It is not that there is anything wrong in secular employment; God's will is that man should work in order to provide for his needs and those of his family. But the life of true discipleship demands that the kingdom of God and His righteousness be sought first; that a believer should not spend his life doing what the unregenerate could do as well, if not better; and that the function of a job is merely to provide for current necessities while the main vocation of the Christian is to preach the kingdom of God.

Mr. Too Easy

The third man has been called Mr. Too Easy. He resembled the first in that he volunteered to follow the Lord. But he resembled the second in that he used those contradictory words, "Lord...me first...". He said, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first bid them farewell, which are at home at my house."

Once again we must admit that, taken by itself, there was nothing basically wrong with his request. It is not contrary to God's law to show a loving interest in one's relatives or to observe the rules of etiquette when leaving them. What then was the point on which this man failed the test? It was this—he allowed the tender ties of nature to supersede the place of Christ.

And so with penetrating insight, the Lord Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." In other words, "My disciples are not made of such self-centered, flabby stuff as you have exhibited. I want those who are willing to renounce home ties, who will not be distracted by sentimental relatives, who will put me above everyone else in their lives."

We are forced to conclude that Mr. Too Easy left Jesus and walked sadly down the road. His over-confident aspirations to be a disciple had dashed themselves to pieces on the rocks of congenial family bonds. Perhaps it was a weeping mother who sobbed, "You'll break your mother's heart if you leave me to go to the mission field." We do not know. All we know is that the Bible graciously refrains from giving the name of this faint-hearted fellow who, by turning back, missed the greatest opportunity of his life and earned the epitaph, "Not fit for the kingdom of God."

Summary

These then are three of the primary hindrances to true discipleship, illustrated by three men who were not willing to go all the way with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Too Quick—the love of earthly comforts.

Mr. Too Slow—the precedence of a job or occupation.

Mr. Too Easy—the priority of tender family ties.

The Lord Jesus still calls, as He has ever called, for men and women to follow Him heroically and sacrificially.

The escape routes still present themselves saying with solicitous words, "Spare thyself! Be it far from thee!"

Few are willing to respond.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,

Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be,
Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known,
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heav'n are still my own.

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Saviour, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me—
Thou art not, like them, untrue;
Oh! while Thou dost smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends disown me,
Show Thy face, and all is bright.

—H. F. Lyte

cont....

Re: CLASSIC BOOK: True Discipleship by William MacDonald - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/24 0:15

Disciples Are Stewards

Read Luke 16:1-13

It was to the disciples that the parable of the unjust steward was spoken. In it, the Savior sets forth principles that apply to disciples of all time. After all, the disciples of Christ are essentially stewards, entrusted with the care of His property and His interests here on earth.

The parable bristles with difficulties. It seems to commend dishonesty and crookedness. But when understood in its proper light, it is laden with instruction of greatest importance.

The story in brief is this. A wealthy property owner had hired an employee to care for his business. In the course of time, the master learned that this employee was squandering his money. Immediately he demanded an audit of the books, then gave him notice that his employment would be terminated.

The employee realized that his future prospects were dismal. He was too old to do hard, physical labor, and he was ashamed to beg. So he hit upon a scheme that would assure him friends for the days ahead. He went to one of his master's accounts and asked, "How much do you owe my boss?" The answer was "Seven hundred and fifty gallons of oil." "Well," said the employee, "pay for half that amount and we'll call it even." He went to another of his employer's debtors and asked, "How much do you owe?" The customer replied, "Eight hundred bushels of wheat." "I see; well, you pay me six hundred and forty bushels, and we'll consider the account closed."

Even more shocking than the action of the dishonest employee is the comment that follows:

"And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely; for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the children of light" (v. 8, Revised Version).

How are we to understand this apparent approval of dishonest business practices?

One thing is certain. Neither his lord nor our Lord commended such crookedness. It was this very thing that caused him to be dismissed in the first place. No righteous person could ever approve of such cheating and unfaithfulness. Whatever else the parable teaches, it does not suggest that embezzlement is ever justified.

There is only one thing for which the unjust steward could be commended, that is, that he planned for the future. He took steps to insure that he would still have friends after his stewardship had ended. He acted for "then" instead of "now."

That is the point of the parable. Worldly people take forceful action to provide for the days ahead. The only future they are concerned about is their old age, their years of retirement. So they work diligently to make sure that they will be comfortably situated when they are no longer able to carry on gainful employment. No stone is left unturned in their quest for social security.

In this respect, the unsaved are wiser than Christians. However, in order to understand why, we must realize that the Christian's future is not on this earth but in heaven. This is the crucial point. The future for an unbeliever means the time between now and the grave. The future for a child of God means eternity with Christ.

The parable teaches then that the unregenerate are more wise and aggressive in preparing for their future on earth than Christians are for theirs in heaven.

With this background, the Lord Jesus presents the practical application of the lesson:

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

The mammon of unrighteousness is money or other material possessions. We can use these things for winning souls to Christ. People won through our faithful use of money are here called "friends." A day is coming when we will fail (either die or be taken to heaven by Christ at the Rapture). Friends won through the wise use of our material possessions will then serve as a welcoming committee to receive us into the everlasting dwelling places.

This is the way in which wise stewards plan for the future—not by spending their little lives in a vain quest for security on earth; but in a passionate endeavor to be surrounded in heaven by friends who were won to Christ through their money. Money that was converted into Bibles, Testaments, scripture portions, tracts, and other Christian literature. Money that was used to support missionaries and other Christian workers. Money that helped to finance Christian radio programs and other worthy Christian activities. In short, money that was used for the spread of the gospel in any and every way. "The only way we can lay up our treasures in heaven is to put them into something that is going to heaven."

When a Christian sees that his material possessions can be used in the salvation of precious souls, he loses his love for "things." Luxury, wealth and material splendor turn sour in his stomach. He longs to see the mammon of unrighteousness converted by divine alchemy into worshippers of the Lamb forever and ever. He is captivated by the possibility of doing a work in human lives that will bring eternal glory to God and eternal blessing to the people themselves. He feels something of the thirst of Rutherford:

O if one soul from Anworth
Meets me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land.

Anne R. Cousin

To him all the diamonds, rubies and pearls, all the bank deposits, all the insurance policies, all the mansions, pleasure boats and magnificent cars are but mammon of unrighteousness. If used for self, they perish with the using, but if spent for Christ, they reap dividends throughout eternity.

The manner in which we deal with material things, the extent to which we grasp them is a test of our character. The Lord emphasizes this in verse 10:

The man who is dependable in a very small matter is dependable also in a large deal, the man who is dishonest in a very small matter is dishonest also in a large deal (Williams' Translation).

Here the very small matter is the stewardship of material things. Those who are dependable are the ones who use these things for the glory of God and the blessing of their fellow men. Those who are dishonest are the ones who use their possessions for comfort, luxurious living and selfish enjoyment. If a man cannot be trusted in a small matter (material things), how could he be trusted in a large deal (the stewardship of spiritual things). If a man is dishonest with the mammon of unrighteousness, how can he expect to be faithful as a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Corint

hians 4:1).

The Savior therefore presses the argument a step further:

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches (verse 11)

Earthly treasures are not true riches; their value is finite and temporal. Spiritual treasures are true riches; their value can not be measured and will never end. Unless a man is dependable in his handling of material things, he cannot expect God to trust him with spiritual prosperity in this life or treasures in heaven.

Again the Lord extends the argument by saying:

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own (verse 12, Revised Version).

Material things are not our own; they belong to God. Everything that we possess is a sacred stewardship from God. All that can be called our own are the fruits of our diligent study and service here, and the rewards of faithful stewardship there. If we have not proved dependable in handling God's property, then we cannot expect to enter into the deep truths of God's Word in this life, or to be rewarded in the next.

With climactic emphasis, the Lord then summarized the teaching of the entire parable:

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (verse 13).

There cannot be divided allegiance. A disciple cannot live for two worlds. A steward either loves God or loves mammon. If he loves mammon, he hates God.

And, mind you, this was written to disciples, not to the unsaved.

Zeal

A disciple can be forgiven if he does not have great mental ability. He can be forgiven also if he does not display outstanding physical prowess. But no disciple can be excused if he does not have zeal. If his heart is not aflame with a red-hot passion for the Savior, he stands condemned.

After all, Christians are followers of the One Who said, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). Their Savior was consumed with a passion for God and for His interests. There is no room in His train for half-hearted followers.

The Lord Jesus lived in a state of spiritual tension. This is indicated by His words, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50). And again by His memorable utterance, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

The zeal of John the Baptist was attested by the Lord when He said, "He was a burning and a shining light" (John 5:35).

The apostle Paul was a zealot. Someone has tried to capture the fervency of his life in the following sketch:

He is a man without the care of making friends, without the hope or desire of worldly good, without the apprehension of worldly loss, without the care of life, without the fear of death. He is a man of no rank, country or condition. A man of one thought—the Gospel of Christ. A man of one purpose—the glory of God. A fool, and content to be reckoned a fool for Christ. Let him be called enthusiast, fanatic, babbler or any other outlandish nondescript the world may choose to denominate him. But still let him be nondescript. As soon as they call him trader, householder, citizen, man of wealth, man of the world, man of learning, or even man of common sense, it is all over with his character. He must speak or he must die, and though he should die, he will speak. He has no rest but hastens over land and sea, over rocks and trackless deserts. He cries aloud and spares not, and will not be hindered. In the prisons, he lifts up his voice, and in the tempests of the

ocean, he is not silent. Before awful councils and throned kings, he witnesses in behalf of the truth. Nothing can quench his voice but death, and even in the article of death, before the knife has severed his head from his body, he speaks, he prays, he testifies, he confesses, he beseeches, he wars, and at length he blesses the cruel people.

Other men of God have shown this same burning desire to please God.

C. T. Studd once wrote:

Some want to live within the sound
Of church or chapel bell.
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell.

And, incidentally, it was an article written by an atheist that spurred Studd to all-out dedication to Christ. The article was as follows:

If I firmly believed, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, then religion would mean to me everything. I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought, and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness. I should labor in its cause alone. I would take thought for the morrow of Eternity alone. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences would never stay my hand, or seal my lips. Earth, its joys and its griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to look upon Eternity alone, and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?

John Wesley was a man of zeal. He said, "Give me a hundred men who love God with all their hearts, and fear nothing but sin, and I will move the world."

Jim Elliot, martyr of Ecuador, was a torch of fire for Jesus Christ. One day, as he was meditating on the words, "He maketh his ministers a flame of fire" (Hebrews 1:7), he wrote in his diary:

Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of "other things." Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be a flame. But flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul—short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short-Lived, Whose zeal for God's house consumed Him. "Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God."

The last line is quoted from a fervent poem of Amy Carmichael. It is little wonder that Jim Elliot drew inspiration from it:

From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb higher,
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings;
Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified,
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.

The disgrace of the church in the twentieth century is that more zeal is evident among Communists and cultists than among Christians.

In 1903, one man with seventeen followers began his attack on the world. His name was Lenin. By 1918, the number had increased to forty thousand, and with that forty thousand, he gained control of the one hundred sixty million people of Russia. And the movement has gone on and now controls over one-third of the world's population. However much one might be opposed to their principles, one cannot help admiring their zeal.

Many Christians felt strongly rebuked when Billy Graham first read the following letter, written by an American college student who had been converted to communism in Mexico. The purpose of the letter was to explain to his fiancée why he must break off their engagement:

We Communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get shot and hung and lynched and tarred and feathered and jailed and slandered, and ridiculed and fired from our jobs, and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We Communists don't have the time or the money for many movies, or concerts, or T-bone steaks, or decent homes and new cars. We've been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD COMMUNISM.

We Communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity, and if our personal lives seem hard, or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. There is one thing in which I am in dead earnest and that is the Communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas, and actions according to how they affect the Communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

If Communists can be as dedicated as this for their cause, how much more should Christians pour themselves out in loving, glad devotion for their glorious Lord. Surely if the Lord Jesus is worth anything, He is worth everything. "If the Christian faith is worth believing in at all, it is worth believing in heroically"—Findlay.

If God has really done something in Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, and if He has made it known, then it is a Christian duty to be intolerant of everything which ignores, denies, or explains it away.—James Denney.

God wants men who are completely turned over to the control of the Holy Spirit. These men will appear to others as if they were drunk with wine, but those who know better will realize that they are driven on by "a deep, enormous, haunting, never-sated thirst for God."

Let every would-be disciple take to heart the necessity of zeal in his life. Let him aspire to fulfill the description given by Bishop Ryle:

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness, whether he is rich or whether he is poor, whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offence, whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish—whether he gets blame, or whether he gets praise—whether he gets honor, or whether he gets shame—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it—he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such an one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, and work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. Yes: if he is only a pauper, on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily, by continually interceding against it. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, on the hill (Exodus 17:9-13). If he is cut off from

man working himself, he will give the Lord no rest till help is raised up from another quarter, and the work is done. This is what I mean when I speak of "zeal" in religion.

Faith

There can be no true discipleship without profound and unquestioning faith in the living God. He who would do exploits for God must first trust Him implicitly. "All God's giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them"—Hudson Taylor.

Now true faith is always based upon some promise of God, some portion of His Word. This is important. The believer first reads or hears some promise of the Lord. The Holy Spirit takes that promise and applies it to his heart and conscience in a very personal way. The Christian becomes aware that God has spoken to him directly. With utter confidence in the trustworthiness of the One Who has promised, he reckons the promise as sure as if it were already fulfilled, even though, humanly speaking, it is impossible.

Or perhaps it is a commandment rather than a promise. To faith, there is no difference. If God commands, He enables. If He bids Peter to walk on the water, Peter can be sure that the needed power will be given (Matthew 14:28). If He commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, we can be sure of the needed grace (Mark 16:15).

Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends. "The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and where sight and sense fail"—George Muller.

Faith says, "If 'impossible' is the only objection, it can be done!"

"Faith brings God into the scene, and therefore it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties—yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgment of faith, God is the grand answer to every question—the grand solution of every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence it matters not in the least to faith whether it be six hundred thousand (dollars) or six hundred million; it knows that God is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, 'How can such and such things be?' It is full of 'Hows'; but faith has one great answer to ten thousand 'hows,' and that answer is, God"—C. H. Mackintosh.

Humanly speaking, it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child. But God had promised, and to Abraham there was only one impossibility—that God could lie.

(He) against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, "So shall thy seed be." And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Romans 4:18-21).

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees
And looks to God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries, "It shall be done!"

Our God is the God Who specializes in impossibilities (Luke 1:37). There is nothing too hard for Him (Genesis 18:14). "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

Faith claims His promise, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23), and exults with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Doubt sees the obstacles—
Faith sees the way!
Doubt sees the darkest night—
Faith sees the day!
Doubt dreads to take a step—
Faith soars on high,

Doubt questions, "Who believes?"
Faith answers, "I!"

Because faith deals with the supernatural and the divine, it does not always seem to be "reasonable." It was not using "common sense" for Abraham to go out, not knowing where he was going, but simply obeying God's command (Hebrews 11:8). It was not "shrewd" of Joshua to attack Jericho without death-dealing weapons (Joshua 6:1-20). Men of the world would scoff at such "insanity." But it worked!

Actually, faith is most reasonable. What is more reasonable than that a creature should trust his Creator? Is it insane to believe in One Who can neither lie nor fail nor err? To trust God is the most sensible, sane, rational thing that a man can do. It is no leap in the dark. Faith demands the surest evidence and finds it in God's unchanging Word. No one has ever trusted Him in vain; no one ever will. Faith in the Lord involves no risk whatever.

Faith truly glorifies God; it gives Him His proper place as the One Who is completely trustworthy. On the other hand, unbelief dishonors God; it charges Him with lying (1 John 5:10). It limits the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Faith gives man his proper place also—as a humble suppliant, bowed in the dust before the sovereign Lord of all.

Faith is opposed to sight. Paul reminded us that "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). To walk by sight means to have visible means of support, to have adequate reserves for the future, to employ human cleverness in insuring against unseen risks. The walk of faith is the very opposite; it is a moment by moment reliance on God alone. It is a perpetual crisis of dependence on the Lord. The flesh shrinks from a position of complete dependence on an unseen God. It seeks to provide a cushion against possible losses. If it cannot see where it is going, it is apt to suffer complete nervous collapse. But faith steps forward in obedience to the Word of God, rises above circumstances, and trusts the Lord for the supply of all needs.

Any disciple who determines to walk by faith can be sure that his faith will be tested. Sooner or later, he will be brought to the end of his human resources. In his extremity, he will be tempted to appeal to his fellow men. If he is really trusting the Lord, he will look to God alone.

"To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him"—C. H. Mackintosh.

The normal attitude of a disciple is to desire an increase in his faith (Luke 17:5). He has already trusted Christ for salvation. Now he seeks to extend the areas of his life which are submitted to the Lord's control. As he faces sickness, trials, tragedies, and bereavements, he comes to know God in a new and more intimate way, and his faith is strengthened. He proves the truth of the promise, "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3). The more he finds God to be trustworthy, the more anxious he is to trust Him for greater things.

Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, the disciple's desire should be to saturate himself in the Scriptures—to read them, study them, memorize them, meditate upon them day and night. They are his chart and compass, his guide and comfort, his lamp and light.

In the life of faith, there is always room for advancement. When we read of what has been accomplished through faith, we realize that we are like little children, playing at the edge of a boundless ocean. The exploits of faith are given in Hebrews 11. They rise to a magnificent crescendo in verses 32-40:

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided s

ome better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

One final word! We have already mentioned that a disciple who walks by faith will doubtless be considered a dreamer or a fanatic by men of the world or even by other Christians. But it is good to remember that "the faith that enables one to 'walk with God' enables him also to attach the proper values to the thoughts of men"—C. H. Mackintosh.

Prayer

The only completely satisfactory book that has ever been written on the subject of prayer is the Bible. All other treatments leave us with a feeling that there are depths that have not been reached and heights that have not been scaled. In this booklet, we cannot hope to improve on the efforts of others. All we can do is to summarize some of the important principles of prayer, especially as they have to do with the subject of Christian discipleship.

1. The best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity. We have all proved this to be true. When our lives are serene and placid, our prayers are apt to be dull and listless. When we reach a crisis, a moment of danger, a serious illness, or a heavy bereavement, then our prayers are fervent and vital. Someone has said that "the arrow that is to enter heaven must be launched from a bow fully bent." A sense of urgency, of helplessness, of conscious need is the womb from which the best prayers are born.

Unfortunately, we spend most of our lives trying to cushion ourselves from necessities. By the use of clever business methods, we provide comfortable reserves against every imaginable contingency. Through sheer human cleverness, we reach the stage where we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. Then we wonder why our prayer life is shallow and lifeless and why no fire falls from heaven. If we truly walked by faith instead of by sight, then our prayer life would be revolutionized.

2. One of the conditions of successful prayer is that we must "draw near with a true heart" (Hebrews 10:22). This means that we must be genuine and sincere before the Lord. There must be no hypocrisy. If we are to meet this condition, then we will never ask God to do something when we have it in our own power to do it. For instance, we will never ask Him to raise up a certain amount of money for a Christian project if we ourselves have surplus funds that could be used in this way. God is not mocked. He does not answer prayers if He has already given us the answer, and we are not willing to use it.

In the same connection, we should not pray for the Lord to send others on His errands if we are not willing to go ourselves. Thousands of prayers have been uttered in behalf of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. But if all who prayed had been willing to be used of the Lord in reaching these people, then perhaps the history of Christian missions would have been more encouraging.

3. Prayer should be simple, believing and unquestioning. It is all too possible to become absorbed with the theological problems connected with prayer. This serves only to dull the spiritual senses. It is better to pray than to solve all the mysteries connected with prayer. Let the doctors of divinity spin their theories concerning prayer. But let the simple believer storm the gates of heaven with childlike trust. It was Augustine who said, "The unlearned take heaven by force, and we with all our learning rise not above flesh and blood."

I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know—God answers prayer.

I know not when He sends the word
That tells us fervent prayer is heard;

I know it cometh soon or late,
Therefore we need to pray and wait.

I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the guise I thought.

I leave my prayers with Him alone,
Whose will is wiser than my own.

—Lola C. Henson

4. For true power in prayer, hold nothing back. Be surrendered to Christ. Go all out for Him. Forsake all to follow the Savior. The type of devotion that crowns Christ Lord of all is the kind that He loves to honor.

5. God seems to place a special value on prayer when it costs us something. Those who rise early in the morning enjoy fellowship with the One Who likewise arose early to receive His instructions for the day from His Father. Likewise, those who are in such deadly earnest that they are willing to pray through the night enjoy a power with God that cannot be denied. Prayer that costs nothing is worth nothing; it is simply a by-product of a cheap Christianity.

The New Testament often links prayer with fasting. Abstinence from food can be a valuable aid in spiritual exercises. From the human side, it promotes clarity, concentration and keenness. From the divine standpoint, it seems that the Lord is especially willing to answer prayer when we put that prayer before our necessary food.

6. Avoid selfish prayers. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). The primary burden of our prayers should be the interests of the Lord. First we should pray, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Then we may add, "Give us this day our daily bread."

7. We should honor God with great requests because He is a great God. "Let us have faith to expect great things from God.

Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring
For His love and power are such
Thou canst never ask too much.

—John Newton

How often have we grieved the Lord by expecting so little of Him. We have been content with such scanty triumphs, with such poor attainments, with such feeble longings after higher things, that we have not impressed those around us with the thought that our God is a great God. We have not glorified Him in the eyes of men who know Him not by lives that arrested attention and awakened inquiry as to the power by which they were sustained. Too often it has not been said of us, as was said of the apostle, "They glorified God in me"—E. W. Moore.

8. In praying, we should first make sure we are in the will of God. Then we should pray, believing that He will hear and answer. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14, 15).

To pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus means to pray in His will. When we truly pray in His Name, it is the same as if He were actually uttering the request to God, His Father. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13, 14). "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23). "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19, 20). "To ask, 'In His Name,' means to be taken by the hand and led to prayer by Him; it means, may I say, His kneeling by our side and His desires flowing through our heart. That is what it means. 'In His Name.' His Name is what He is, His nature, and therefore to pray in the Name of Christ must mean to pray according to His blessed will. Can I pray for evil in the Name of the Son of God? What I pray for should really be an expression of His nature. Can I do that in prayer? Prayer should breathe the power of the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ, the desires of Christ in us and for us. The Lord teach us more and more to pray in His Name. We should not think of closing a prayer, without the very words: 'In the blessed Name of our Lord,' but then the whole supplication should be infiltrated by, permeated by the blessed Name of Jesus—all according to that Name"—Samuel Ridout.

9. If our prayer life is to be truly effective, we must keep short accounts with God. By that, we mean that sin must be confessed and forsaken as soon as we are conscious it has entered into our lives. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). We must abide in Christ. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). The person who abides in Christ stays so close to Him that he i

s filled with a knowledge of the Lord's will. He can thus pray intelligently and be assured of answers. Again, the abiding life demands that we obey His commandments. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). A right state of soul is necessary if our prayers are to be heard and answered (1 John 3:20).

10. We should not only pray at certain stated times during the day; we should develop the attitude of prayer, so that we look to the Lord as we are walking along the street, driving in a car, working at a desk, or serving in the home. Nehemiah is a classic example of this spontaneous type of prayer (Nehemiah 2:4b). It is a good thing to "dwell in the secret place of the most High" instead of making occasional visits there.

11. Finally, our prayers should be specific. It is only as we pray for definite matters that we can see definite answers.

Prayer is a marvelous privilege. By this means, we can, as Hudson Taylor said, learn to move man through God. "What ministries are in our hands for working miracles in the wonder realm of prayer! We can take sunshine into cold and sultry places. We can light the lamp of hope in the prison-house of despondency. We can loose the chains from the prisoner's limbs. We can take gleams and thoughts of home into the far country. We can carry heavenly cordials to the spiritually faint, even though they are laboring beyond the seas. Miracles in response to prayer!"—J. H. Jowett.

To this, a writer named Wenham adds his testimony: "Preaching is a rare gift; prayer is a rarer one. Preaching, like a sword, is a weapon to use at close quarters; those far off cannot be reached by it. Prayer, like a breechloader, has longer range, and under some circumstances is even more effective."

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all the distant and the near
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?

—Trench

Warfare

One could scarcely read the New Testament even casually without realizing that the figure of warfare is often used to describe Christ's program on earth. True Christianity is far removed from the hurdy-gurdy entertainment of modern Christendom. It is not to be confused with the luxury-living and pleasure-seeking that are so rampant today. Rather, it is a struggle to the death, an unceasing conflict against the forces of hell. No disciple is worth his salt who does not realize that the battle is drawn and that there is no turning back.

In war, there must be unity. It is no time for petty bickering, for partisan jealousies, for divided loyalties. No house divided against itself can stand. Therefore, the soldiers of Christ must be united. The way to unity is through humility. This is clearly taught in Philippians 2. It is impossible to have strife with a truly humble man. It takes two to make a fight. "Only by pride cometh contention." Where there is no pride, there is no room for contention.

War demands austerity and sacrificial living. In wars of any consequence, there is invariably a vast system of rationing. It is high time that Christians realized that we are at war and that expenditures must be cut to a minimum so that as much of our resources as possible can be thrown into the struggle.

Not many see this as clearly as a young disciple named R_____ M_____. In 1960, he was president of the freshman class of a Christian school. During his term, it was proposed that expenditures be made for the usual class parties, jackets,

and a class gift. Rather than approve such expenditures which did not contribute directly to the furtherance of the gospel, R_____ M_____ resigned from his post as president. The following letter was distributed to his fellow classmen on the day his resignation was announced:

Dear Classmates:

Since the matters of class parties, jackets, and the class gift have been brought before the Cabinet, I, as the president of the class have been considering the Christian attitude toward these areas.

I think we would find the greatest joy for our own selves in giving ourselves, our money, and our time entirely for Christ and for others, thus finding the reality of His Words: "He who loses his life for My sake will find it."

For Christians to spend their money and time on things that do not result in a definite witness to the unbeliever or for the building up of His children in Him would seem to be inconsistent with the facts that 7000 people die daily from starvation and over half the world has never heard of man's only Hope.

How much more glory we could give to God by helping to spread the Gospel to the other 60% of the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ or even in many neighboring homes instead of coming together in a little clique by ourselves, limiting our social well-roundedness to those of like mind, and wasting money and time for our own pleasure.

cont....

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/10/24 0:15

Since I am aware of specific needs and opportunities where finances can be used to such great advantage to the glory of Jesus Christ and for helping my neighbor here and abroad, it is impossible for me to allow class funds to be spent unnecessarily on ourselves. If I were one of those who are in so great a need, as I know of so many to be in, I would want those who have the ability to do all that they could to supply me with the Gospel and with my material needs.

"And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them."

"But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"

Therefore it is with love and prayer, that you might see the Lord Jesus giving His all (2 Corinthians 8:9), that I hereby submit to you my resignation as president of the class of '63.

In Him with you,

R_____ M_____

War demands suffering. If young men today are willing to lay down their lives for their country, how much more willing should Christians be to lose their lives for Christ's sake and the gospel. A faith that costs nothing is worth nothing. If the Lord Jesus means anything to us at all, He should mean everything to us, and no considerations of personal safety or immunity from suffering should deter us in our service for Him.

When the apostle Paul sought to defend his apostleship against the attacks of his small-souled critics, he did not point to his family background or his education or his worldly attainments. Rather, he pointed to his sufferings for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I, forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

In delivering his noble challenge to son Timothy, he urged, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

War demands implicit obedience. A true soldier will follow the orders of his superior without questions and without delay. It is preposterous to think that Christ could be satisfied with anything less. As Creator and Redeemer, He has every right to expect that those who follow Him into battle will obey His orders promptly and completely.

War demands skill in the use of weapons. A Christian's weapons are prayer and the Word of God. He must give himself to fervent, believing, persevering prayer. Only thus can the strongholds of the enemy be pulled down. Then, too, he must be proficient in the use of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The enemy will do everything in his power to trick him into dropping this sword. He will cast doubts upon the inspiration of the Scriptures. He will point to alleged contradictions. He will bring opposing arguments from science and philosophy and human traditions. But the soldier of Christ must stand his ground, proving the effectiveness of his weapon by using it in season and out of season.

The weapons of the Christian warfare seem ridiculous to the man of the world. The plan that proved effective against Jericho would be ridiculed by military leaders today. Gideon's insignificant army would evoke only ridicule. And what shall we say of David's slingshot, of Shamgar's ox-goad, and of God's paltry army of fools down through the centuries? The spiritual mind knows that God is not on the side of the biggest battalions, but rather that He loves to take the weak and a poor and despised things of this world and glorify Himself through them.

War demands a knowledge of the enemy and of his strategy. So it is in the Christian warfare. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). We know that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15). A trained Christian soldier knows that his bitterest opposition will not come from the drunkard, or the common thief, or the harlot, but rather from professed ministers of religion. It was the religious leaders who nailed the Christ of God to the cross. It was religious leaders who persecuted the early church. Paul met his most savage attacks from the hands of those who professed to be God's servants. So it has been down through the years. Satan's ministers are transformed as the ministers of righteousness. They speak religious language, they wear religious clothes, and they act with an affected piety, but their hearts are filled with hatred for Christ and for the gospel.

War demands undistractedness. "Every one who serves as a soldier avoids becoming entangled in the affairs of civil life, so that he may satisfy the officer who enlisted him" (2 Timothy 2:4, Weymouth). The disciple of Christ learns to be intolerant of anything that might stand between his soul and complete devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is ruthless without being offensive, firm without being discourteous. But he has one passion and one passion alone. Everything else must be brought into captivity.

War demands courage in the face of danger. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore..." (Ephesians 6:13, 14a). It has often been pointed out that the armor of the Christian soldier in Ephesians 6:13-18 makes no provision for retreat. Why retreat? If "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," if no one can be successfully against us because God is for us, if victory is assured before we ever start to fight, how can we ever think of turning back?

What though I stand with the winners,
Or perish with those that fall?
Only the cowards are sinners,
Fighting the fight is all.
Strong is my foe, who advances,
Snapped is my blade, O Lord;
See their proud banners and lances—
But spare me the stub of a sword.

—quoted by Amy Carmichael

World Dominion

God has called us to world dominion. It was never His intention that we should be "born a man and die a grocer." It was not His purpose that we spend our lives as "minor officials in transient enterprises."

When He originally created man, the Lord gave him dominion over the earth. He crowned him with glory and honor and put all things in subjection under his feet. Man was clothed with dignity and sovereignty—just slightly lower than that of the angels.

When he sinned, Adam forfeited much of the dominion that had been his by divine decree. Instead of exercising undisputed sway, he ruled unsteadily over an uncertain realm.

In the gospel, there is a sense in which we can regain dominion. It is not now a matter of control over snarling dogs or poisonous snakes—rather, it is claiming the heathen for our possession. "True imperialism is empire by moral and spiritual sovereignty; allurements and dominion by the fascinating radiance of a pure and sanctified life"—J. H. Jowett.

Actually, this dignity of the Christian calling is something that Adam never knew. We are partners with God in the world's redemption. "This is our errand—to anoint men in the Name of the Lord to royalty of life, to sovereignty over self, to service for the realm"—Dinsdale T. Young.

The tragedy of much of life today is the failure to appreciate our high calling. We are content to spend our years "hugging the subordinate," or "majoring in minors." We creep instead of fly. We are slaves instead of kings. Few have the vision of claiming countries for Christ.

Spurgeon was an exception. He wrote the following dynamic message to his son:

I should not like you, if meant by God to be a missionary, to die a millionaire.

I should not like it, were you fitted to be a missionary, that you should drivel down to a king.

What are all your kings, all your nobles, all your diadems, when you put them together, compared with the dignity of winning souls to Christ, with the special honor of building for Christ, not on another man's foundation, but preaching Christ's Gospel in regions far beyond?

Another exception was John Mott, well-known missionary statesman. When President Coolidge asked him to serve as an ambassador to Japan, Mott replied, "Mr. President, since God called me to be an ambassador of His, my ears have been deaf to all other calls."

Billy Graham tells of a third exception. "When the Standard Oil Company was looking in the Far East for a man, they chose a missionary to be their representative. They offered him ten thousand, and he turned it down; twenty-five thousand, and he turned it down; fifty thousand, and he turned it down. They said, 'What's wrong?' He said, 'Your price is all right, but your job is too small. God has called me to be a missionary.'"

The Christian's calling is the noblest of all, and if we realize it, our lives will take on new loftiness. We will no longer speak of ourselves as "called to be a plumber" or "called to be a physicist" or "called to be a dentist." Rather, we will see ourselves as "called to be an apostle"—and all these other things as mere means of livelihood.

We will see ourselves called to preach the gospel to every creature, to make disciples of all nations, to evangelize the world.

An immense task, you say? Immense, yes—but not impossible. The enormity of the task is indicated by the following graphic view of the world in miniature:

If in our imagination we could compress the present population of the world—now in excess of three billion people—into a group of a thousand persons living in a single town, the following is the picture of contrasts we would then vividly see.

Sixty persons would represent the U.S. population; all others would be represented by 940. The 60 Americans would have 35% of the total income of the entire town; the 940 would share the other 65%.

Thirty-six of the Americans in the town would be (professing) Christian church members; and 24 would not. In the town as a whole, about 290 would be (professing) Christians and 710 would not. At least 80 persons in the whole town would be believing Communists and 370 would be under Communist domination. Possibly 70 in the whole town would be (professing) Protestant Christians.

Three hundred and three persons in the whole town would be white; 697 would be non-white. The 60 Americans would have an average life expectancy of 70 years; all the other 940 would average under 40.

The Americans would have 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ times as much per person as all the rest on an average. They would produce 16% of the town's total food supply, eat up all but 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of that total supply and keep most of it for their future use in expensive storage equipment. When it is remembered that most of the 940 non-Americans in the town would always be hungry and never know quite when they would get enough to eat, the situation created by this disparity in food supply and the existence of vast reserves becomes fairly apparent, particularly in view of the fact that the Americans already eat 72% above the optimum food requirements. They could actually save money by giving away excess food because of the cost of storing it, but they think that would be a dangerous "give-away program of soft-headed do gooders."

The 60 Americans would have, of the town's total supply, 12 times as much electric power as all the rest, 22 times as much coal, 21 times as much petroleum, 50 times as much steel and 50 times as much in general equipment.

The lowest income groups among the 60 Americans would be better off than the average in much of the rest of the town. Literally most of the non-American people in the town would be poor, hungry, sick and ignorant. Almost half would not be able to read or write. More than half would never have heard of Christ or what he stood for. But very soon more than half would be hearing about Karl Marx. (Words in parentheses have been added).

—Harry Smith Leiper

How then is the world going to be reached for Christ with the gospel in our generation? The answer—only by men and women who love God with all their hearts and who love their neighbors as themselves. It is only the devotion and dedication that spring from an undying love that will ever accomplish the task.

Those who are constrained by the love of Christ will count no sacrifice too great to make for Him. They will do because of love to Him what they would never do for worldly gain. They will not count their lives dear unto themselves. They will spend and be spent if only men might not perish for want of the gospel.

Lord Crucified, give me a heart like Thine!
Teach me to love the dying souls of men—
And keep my heart in closest touch with Thee;
And give me love—pure Calvary's Love
To bring the lost to Thee.

—James A. Stewart

Unless love is the motive, the cause is hopeless. It profits nothing. The ministry then becomes nothing more than sounding brass or clanging cymbals. But when love is the guiding star, when men go forth aflame with devotion to Christ, no power on earth can stop the onward sweep of the gospel.

Picture then a band of disciples, utterly sold out to Jesus Christ, driven by the love of Christ, traversing land and sea as heralds of a glorious message, tirelessly pressing on to new areas, finding in every life they meet a soul for whom Christ died, and coveting each one as a worshipper of the Savior throughout eternity. What method do these otherworldly men adopt in making Christ known?

The New Testament seems to present two principal methods of reaching the world with the gospel. The first is by public proclamation; the second is by private discipling.

As for the first, it was used commonly by the Lord Jesus and by His disciples. Wherever people were gathered together, there was an opportunity for preaching the good news. Thus we find gospel meetings in the market places, in prisons, in the synagogues, on the beaches, and by the banks of rivers. The urgency and superlative character of the message made it unthinkable to limit it to conventional meeting places.

The second method of propagating the Christian faith is by private discipling of individuals. This is the method which the Lord Jesus used in the training of the twelve. He called this little band of men that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth. Day after day, He instructed them in the truth of God. He set before them the task to which they were appointed. He forewarned them in detail of the dangers and difficulties they would encounter. He took them into the private counsels of God and made them partners with Him in the glorious, yet arduous, divine plan. Then he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they launched forth to tell the world of a risen, ascended, glorified Savior. The effectiveness of this method is seen in the fact that the band of disciples, reduced to eleven by the defection of the traitor, turned the world upside down for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul not only practiced this method himself but urged it on Timothy as well. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). The first step is the careful and prayerful selection of faithful men. The second is the imparting to them of the glorious vision. The third is the sending forth of these men to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:19, ASV).

To those who lust for numbers and crave huge crowds, this method will seem dull and tedious. But God knows what He is doing, and His methods are the best methods. More can be accomplished for God by a few dedicated disciples than by a great army of self-satisfied religionists.

As these disciples go forth in the Name of Christ, they follow certain basic principles which are outlined in God's Word. First of all, they are as wise as serpents, yet as harmless as doves. They draw on the resources of the Godhead for wisdom in the difficult path they have to tread. At the same time, they are meek and lowly in their contacts with their fellow men. None need fear physical violence from them; men need only to fear their prayers and their unquenchable witness.

These disciples keep themselves free from the politics of this world. They do not consider themselves as called to battle against any form of government or political ideology. They can operate under any form of government and be loyal to that government up to the point where they are required to compromise their testimony or deny their Lord. Then they refuse to obey and submit to the consequences. But they never conspire against a human government or engage in revolutionary tactics. Did not the Lord say, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight?" These men are ambassadors of a heavenly country and thus pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers.

They are absolutely honest in all their dealings. They avoid subterfuge of all kinds. Their "yes" means yes, and their "no" means no. They refuse to adopt the popular lie that the end justifies the means. Under no circumstances will they do evil that good may come. Each one is an embodied conscience who would rather die than sin.

Another principle invariably followed by these men is that they anchor their work to the local church. They go out into the harvest field of the world to win converts to the Lord Jesus, but then they lead these converts into the fellowship of a local church where they can be strengthened and built up in their most holy faith. True disciples realize that the local church is God's unit on earth for propagating the faith and that the best and most enduring work is built along these lines.

Disciples are wise to avoid entangling alliances of every kind. They steadfastly refuse to allow their movements to be dictated by any human organization. They receive their marching orders directly from headquarters in heaven. This does not mean that they operate without the confidence and commendation of Christians in their local church. On the contrary, they look upon such commendation as a confirmation of God's call to service. But they insist on the necessity of serving Christ in obedience to His Word and to His guidance for them.

Finally, these disciples avoid publicity. They try to keep themselves in the background. Their purpose is to glorify Christ and to make Him known. They are not seeking great things for themselves. Neither do they want to reveal their strategy to the enemy. So they work on quietly and unostentatiously, oblivious of man's praise or blame. They know that "heaven will be the best and safest place to learn the results of their labor."

Discipleship And Marriage

"There are some eunuchs...which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:12).

One of the major questions to be faced by every disciple is whether God has called him to married life or to celibacy. This is entirely a matter of individual guidance from the Lord. No one can legislate for another, and to interfere in such a vita

Life in this sphere is a perilous business.

The general teaching of the Word of God is that marriage was instituted by God for the human race, with several purposes in mind:

1. It was ordained for companionship and pleasure. God saw that "it is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18).
2. It was designed for the procreation of the race. This is indicated by the Lord's command, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28).
3. It was arranged for the preservation of purity in the family and in society. "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife" (1 Corinthians 7:2).

There is nothing in the Word of God to suggest that marriage is incompatible with a life of purity, devotion and service for Christ. Rather we are reminded that "marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4a). The record stands that "whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing" (Proverbs 18:22). The Preacher's words can often be applied to marriage, "Two are better than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9), particularly if the two are joined together in service for the Lord. The increased effectiveness of united action is suggested by Deuteronomy 32:30, where one chases a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

And yet—although marriage is God's will for the race in general, it is not necessarily His will for every individual. While it may be looked upon as an inalienable right, the disciple of the Lord Jesus may choose to forego that right in order to give himself more undistractedly to the service of Christ.

The Lord Jesus noted that in His kingdom there would be those who would become, as it were, eunuchs for His sake:

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Matthew 19:12).

This is definitely a voluntary vow which a person takes as a result of two factors:

1. A sense of the guidance of God to be unmarried.
2. A desire to give himself more wholly to the work of the Lord without the added responsibilities of family life.

There must be the conviction of divine call (1 Corinthians 7:7b). Only by this can the disciple be assured that the Lord will give the needed grace for continence.

Secondly, it must be voluntary. Wherever celibacy is a matter of ecclesiastical compulsion, the danger of impurity and immorality is great.

The apostle Paul emphasized the fact that an unmarried person can often give himself more fully to the King's business:

He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife (1 Corinthians 7:32, 33).

For that reason, he expressed the wish that the unmarried and widow should remain as he was, that is, unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:7, 8).

Even for those who were already married, the apostle insisted that the shortness of the time demanded that everything should be subordinated to the great task of making Christ known:

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away (1 Corinthians 7:29-31).

s 7:29-31).

This certainly does not mean that a man should repudiate his home responsibilities, abandon his wife and children, and sally forth as a missionary. But it does mean that he should not live for the pleasures and satisfactions of home life. He should not use his wife and children as excuses for giving Christ second place.

C. T. Studd was fearful that his fiancée might become so occupied with him that the Lord Jesus would not have first place in her life. To avoid this, he composed a verse for her to recite daily:

Jesus, I love Thee,
Thou art to me,
Dearer than Charlie
Ever could be.

The Communists have learned to subordinate family matters to the one great task of conquering mankind for their cause. Gordon Arnold Lonsdale is an example. After he was captured in England as a Russian spy in 1960, police found a letter from his wife and a six-page reply. His wife wrote, "How unjust is life. I fully understand you are working and this is your duty and you love your work and try to do all this very conscientiously. Nevertheless my reasoning is somehow narrow-minded in a female fashion, and I suffer dreadfully. Write to me how you love me, and maybe I will feel better."

Lonsdale replied, in part: "All I am going to say is that I myself have only one life and not an easy one at that. All I want is to spend my life so that looking at it, there will be no shame in looking back...I am 39 shortly; is there much left?"¹

"The time is short," wrote Paul, "it remaineth that...they that have wives be as though they had none..."²

The tragedy is that hasty or misguided marriage has often been the devil's tool to sidetrack a young disciple from a path of maximum usefulness for Christ. Many aspiring pioneers have forfeited careers of undivided service for Him at the marriage altar.

Marriage may be a bitter enemy of fulfilling Christ's will that all should hear of Him. "Marriage is God-given. But when it becomes a barrier to God's will it is misused. We could name many—both men and women—who have had a definite call to the foreign field and never got there because associates held them back...Nothing—not even the God-given blessing of a life mate—must hinder God's purpose for one's life...Today souls die without Christ because love does ones have taken priority over God's will."²

It is perhaps especially true in the case of pioneer workers that a life of celibacy is preferable. "Men and women of the vanguard may need to deny themselves even the necessities of life to say nothing of its softer though perfectly legitimate pleasures. The duty of such is to endure hardness, to be good soldiers, unencumbered by the things of this life, athletes unentangled by any weight...It is a vocation, a calling, and an ordination to special service."³

For those who hear this call and answer, there is the preferred reward. "Believe me," said Jesus, "when I tell you that...every man who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or land for my sake will receive it all back many times over, and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:28, 29—Phillips).

Counting The Cost

The Lord Jesus never tried to coax men into a glib profession of faith. Neither did He seek to attract a large following by preaching a popular message.

In fact, whenever people began to swarm after Him, He would turn to them and sift them by setting forth the sternest terms of discipleship.

On one of these occasions, our Lord warned those who would follow Him that they should first count the cost. He said:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

usand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace (Luke 14:28-32).

Here He likened the Christian life to a building operation and to a war.

It is sheer folly to start building a tower, He said, unless you are sure you have enough funds to complete it. Otherwise, the unfinished structure will stand as a monument to your lack of foresight.

How true! It is one thing to make a decision for Christ in the warm emotion of a mass evangelistic rally. But it is quite another thing to deny one's self, and take up the cross daily, and follow Christ. Although it costs nothing to become a Christian, it costs plenty to be a consistent believer walking in a path of sacrifice, separation and suffering for Christ's sake. It is one thing to begin the Christian race well, but it is quite another thing to slug it out, day after day, through fair weather and foul, through prosperity and adversity, through joy and through grief.

A critical world is watching. By some strange instinct, it realizes that the Christian life deserves everything or nothing. When it sees an out-and-out Christian, it may sneer, and scoff and ridicule—yet inwardly, it has deep respect for the man who recklessly abandons himself to Christ. But when it sees a half-hearted Christian, it has nothing but contempt. It begins to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish. He made a big commotion when he was converted, but now he's very much like the rest of us. He started out at high speed, but now he's spinning his wheels."

And so the Savior said, "You had better count the cost!"

His second illustration concerned a king who was about to declare war on another. Would it not be sensible for him first to figure whether his 10,000 soldiers would be able to defeat the enemy's army amounting to twice that amount? How absurd it would be if he should declare war first, then reconsider when the armies were marching toward each other. The only thing left would be to hoist the white flag, and to send out a surrender team, abjectly crawling in the dust, and meekly asking for terms of peace.

It is no exaggeration to liken the Christian life to war. There are the fierce enemies—the world, the flesh and the devil. There are discouragements, bloodshed, and suffering. There are the long weary hours of vigil, and the yearning for the light of day. There are tears and toil and testings. And there is daily death.

Anyone who sets out to follow Christ should remember Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. And then he should count the cost. It is either an absolute commitment to Christ, or a sniveling surrender with all that that means of disgrace and degradation.

With these two illustrations, the Lord Jesus warned His hearers against any impulsive decisions to be His disciples. He could promise them persecution, tribulation and distress. They should first count the cost!

And what is the cost? The next verse answers the question:

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

The cost is "everything"—all a man has and is. It meant this for the Savior; it cannot mean less for those who will follow Him. If He Who was rich beyond all description voluntarily became poor, shall His disciples win the crown by some less costly means?

Then the Lord Jesus concluded His discourse with this summation:

Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, therewith shall it be seasoned? (Luke 14:34)

In Bible times, it seems that people did not have pure salt, such as we have on our tables today. Their salt had various impurities, such as sand, etc. It was somehow possible for the salt to lose its saltiness; the residue was insipid and worthless. It could not be used either as soil or fertilizer. At times it was used to make a footpath. Thus it was "good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13).

The application of the illustration is clear. There is one main purpose of the Christian's existence—to glorify God by a

life that is utterly poured out for Him. The Christian may lose his savor by laying up treasures on earth, by catering to his own comfort and pleasure, by trying to make a name for himself in the world, by prostituting his life and talents on the unworthy world.

If the believer misses the central goal of his existence, then he has missed everything. He is neither utilitarian nor ornamental. His fate is, like the savorless salt, to be trampled under foot of men—by their derision, and contempt and scorn.

The final words are these:

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Often when our Lord had uttered some hard saying, He added these words. It is as if He knew that all men would not receive them. He knew that some would try to explain them away, to dull the sharp edge of His cutting demands.

But He knew also that there would be open hearts, young and old, who would bow to His claims as being worthy of Himself.

So He left the door open! “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Those who hear are the ones who count the cost and still say:

I have decided to follow Jesus,
Tho’ no one joins me, still I will follow,
The world behind me, the Cross before me,
No turning back, no turning back.

The Shadow Of Martyrdom

When a man is truly committed to Jesus Christ, it seems to be a matter of no importance to him whether he lives or dies. All that matters is that the Lord be glorified.

As you read THE TRIUMPH OF JOHN AND BETTY STAM, you will find a note repeated throughout the book—“that... Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Philippians 1:20).

The same undertone is found in the writings of Jim Elliot. While still a student at Wheaton College, he wrote in his diary, “I am ready to die for the Aucas.”

At yet another time, he wrote, “Father, take my life, yea, my blood if Thou wilt, and consume it with Thine enveloping fire. I would not save it for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord, have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world. Blood is only of value as it flows before Thine altar.”

It seems that many of God’s heroes reached this same place in their dealings with God. They realized that “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). They were willing to be that corn of wheat.

This attitude is exactly what the Savior taught His disciples, “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:24).

The more we think of it, the more reasonable it seems.

First of all, our lives do not belong to us anyway. They belong to the One Who valued us with the cost of His precious blood. Can we selfishly cling to that which is Another’s? C. T. Studd answered the question for himself:

I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I never understood that if He died for me, then I didn’t belong to myself. Redemption means buying back, so that if I belong to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn’t mine, or else I had to give up everything to God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn’t seem hard to give up all for Him.

Secondly, we are all going to die anyway if the Lord does not come in the meantime. Would it be a greater tragedy to die

in the service of the King or as a mere accident statistic? Was Jim Elliot not right when he said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Thirdly, it is unanswerable logic that if the Lord Jesus died for us, the least we could do would be to die for Him. If the servant is not above his master, what right do we have to go to heaven more comfortably than the Lord Jesus did? It was this consideration that prompted Studd to say, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

Finally, it is criminal to hug our lives when through their reckless abandonment eternal blessing might flow to our fellow men. Men often offer their lives in the interests of medical research. Others die to rescue loved ones from blazing buildings. Still others die in battle to save their country from enemy powers. What are the lives of men worth to us? Can we say with F. W. H. Myers:

Only like souls I see the folks thereunder,
Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,
Sharing their one hope with an empty wonder,
Sadly contented with a show of things.

Then with a rush the intolerable craving
Shivers throughout me like a trumpet call—
Oh, to save these! To perish for their saving,
Die for their life, be offered for them all.

Not all are required to lay down their lives as martyrs. The stake, the spear, the guillotine are reserved for a select few, relatively speaking. But each of us can have the martyr spirit, the martyr zeal, the martyr devotion. Each of us can live as those who have already abandoned their lives to Christ.

Come ill, come well, the cross, the crown,
The rainbow and the thunder;
I fling my soul and body down
For God to plow them under.

The Rewards Of True Discipleship

A life that is abandoned to the Lord Jesus has its own deep reward. There is a joy and pleasure in following Christ that is life in its truest sense.

The Savior repeatedly said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." In fact, this saying of His is found in the four Gospels more frequently than almost anything else He said (see Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25). Why is it repeated so often? Is it not because it sets forth one of the most fundamental principles of the Christian life, namely, that life hugg'd for self is life lost, but life poured out for Him is life found, saved, enjoyed, and kept for eternity?

To be a half-hearted Christian can only insure a miserable existence. To be out and out for Him is the surest way of enjoying His best.

To be a true disciple is to be a bondsman of Jesus Christ and to find that His service is perfect freedom. There is liberty in the step of all who can say, "I love my Master; I will not go out free."

The disciple is not bogged down by petty affairs or by passing things. He is concerned with eternal matters, and, like Hudson Taylor, enjoys the luxury of having few things to care for.

He may be unknown, and yet he is well known. Though constantly dying, yet he persistently lives. He is chastened but not killed. Even in sorrow, he is rejoicing. Although poor himself, he makes many rich. He himself has nothing, yet he possesses all things (2 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

And if it can be said that the life of true discipleship is the most spiritually satisfying life in this world, it can be said with equal certainty that it will be the most rewarded in the age to come. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father"

ther with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).

Therefore, the truly blessed man in time and in eternity is the one who can say with Borden of Yale, "Lord Jesus, I take hands off, as far as my life is concerned. I put Thee on the throne in my heart. Change, cleanse, use me as Thou shalt choose."

He Was Not Willing

"He was not willing that any should perish;
Jesus enthroned in the glory above,
Saw our poor fallen world, pitied our sorrows,
Poured out His life for us, wonderful love!
Perishing, perishing! Thronging our pathway,
Hearts break with burdens too heavy to bear:
Jesus would save, but there's no one to tell them,
No one to lift them from sin and despair.

"He was not willing that any should perish:
Clothed in our flesh with its sorrow and pain,
Came He to seek the lost, comfort the mourner,
Heal the heart broken by sorrow and shame.
Perishing, perishing! Harvest is passing,
Reapers are few and the night draweth near:
Jesus is calling thee, haste to the reaping,
Thou shalt have souls, precious souls for thy hire.

Plenty for pleasure, but little for Jesus;
Time for the world with its troubles and toys,
No time for Jesus' work, feeding the hungry,
Lifting lost souls to eternity's joys.
Perishing, perishing! Hark, how they call us;
Bring us your Savior, oh, tell us of Him!
We are so weary, so heavily laden,
And with long weeping our eyes have grown dim.

"He was not willing that any should perish;
Am I His follower, and can I live
Longer at ease with a soul going downward,
Lost for the lack of the help I might give?
Perishing, perishing! Thou wast not willing;
Master, forgive, and inspire us anew;
Banish our worldliness, help us to ever
Live with eternity's values in view.

—Lucy R. Meyer

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