

We are to be mindful of our Christian influence. We are to avoid the very appearance of evil. We should not live on the border line doing that which is questionable, but we should live affirmatively for our Lord. If anything in our lives causes our brother to offend, we should turn away from it for Christ's sake.

"FEAR NOT . . ."

The scriptures give us glorious assurance of victory over sin. We are reminded that sin will not have dominion over us, "for ye are not under law but under grace." (Rom. 6:14)

Through Jesus Christ our Lord we have the victory. Let us remember that the Sav-

our said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27)

Through the Lord Jesus Christ we can say, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31) When we are confronted by temptations, trials, adversaries, and problems, we can say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:37) To all his hard-pressed followers afflicted by the temptations and pressures of satan, our Lord says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

CHRIST'S PRIORITIES

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Scripture: Luke 9:57-62

Those who were near our Lord soon became aware of how he viewed the world. He looked upon it as a lost, broken, sin-blighted world. We read, "When He saw the multitudes, his heart was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." (Matt. 9:36)

The parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son show his heart concern for

lost humanity. He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:13)

He said again, "I came that they may have life, and may have abundantly." (John 10:10)

Jesus clearly indicated that his kingdom is to have priority in our lives. He said, "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33)

"And their words seemed to them as idle tales and they believed them not." (Luke 24:11)



PRIORITIES OF LIFE

In the scripture before us our Lord clearly points out the priorities he expects.

A young man said unto Jesus, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Jesus replied, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." Jesus clearly indicated that he must have priority over personal convenience, comfort, and security.

The service of Jesus is sometimes performed amid comfort and pleasant surroundings. We can be grateful when we are favored with such circumstances. We find our Lord at times enjoying the hospitality of a lovely home such as that of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. We see him also attending a wedding feast, and there are other very happy occasions in a similar way where Jesus was pleasantly surrounded.

But the service of Christ often calls us into difficulty, discomfort, and danger. A servant is not to be above his Lord. Jesus was repeatedly under such conditions. Those who follow him as fishers of men are frequently called upon to face such realities.

Those who become missionaries often find themselves engaged in arduous travel on land, sea, and in the air. Many find themselves living in unpleasant circumstances and surrounded with difficult conditions.

Sometimes the line of duty calls upon people to undergo trying conditions of wartime with all of its attendant danger. Sometimes families have to be separated, and valiant missionaries go to concentration camp or prison.

Some are called upon to lay down their lives that others may know the meaning of Jesus.

I will recall during the war years a valiant missionary saying to his colleagues as he talked about the difficult conditions under which all of us were living, "I want to go, but I cannot go."

He went on to explain how amid the difficult circumstances we were all facing his mind frequently turned to the pleasant surroundings in the home land; but the impressions in the heart of the will of Christ anchored him and all the rest to the place of danger and difficulty amid war..

Jesus said to another man, "Follow me."

The man said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus replied, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God."

FIRST THINGS

Jesus clearly indicates that he must have priority over the most tender affections and considerations of our lives.

None was more tender in his relationships than Jesus. We see him even while he was hanging on the cross making provision for Mary, his mother. He clearly indicated, however, that where the service of God is concerned tender personal relationships must take second place. On one occasion while surrounded by the multitudes it was reported to Jesus that his mother and brethren wished to speak with him, but Jesus replied, "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward the disciples, and said, 'Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and my sister and mother.'" (Matt. 12:48-50)

Every missionary meets this problem sharply as he is called to leave loved ones and go to distant lands to tell the story of Christ. Some may think that this is easy, but when it is put to the test in actual experience it becomes a very trying matter. Those of us who are engaged in the work of foreign missions constantly are impressed with the deep devotion of young people who stand ready now to sever tender ties in order to follow Christ as he leads.

This is especially noticeable as young women will sometime follow Christ in the line of his calling even though they must go alone when they might remain and have the normal desires of the heart. Some of the most beautiful dedication to be found anywhere comes at this point. When young women recognize Christ's call and give themselves to him even though it may demand that they personally will never have the joys of home and family.

While on mission fields, many servants of God receive distressing word from loved ones at home. Their hearts naturally long to join with their dear ones in those times of need. Prevailing, however, missionaries remain at their places of duty, even when they might long to be at some other place.

Giving Christ priority over the most tender affections is often seen on mission fields as new Christians find opposition in the service of Jesus.

CHRIST OR FAMILY

Many non-Christian homes are bitterly opposed to their young people following Christ. The remainder of the family do not understand. They are filled with many misgivings. Sometimes there are fears on the part of older family members. This opposition sometimes becomes so severe that new Christians have to choose between their Lord and their families. Repeatedly there are those who find it necessary to part with family in order to follow Christ.

It is in giving Christ priority even over the most tender relationships that victory is found. Repeatedly there are instances on mission fields of young people who give Christ priority even at the risk of giving up home and find to their joy that their whole family can be won to Christ as their loyalty becomes clearly evidenced.

Another person said to Jesus, "I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house." But Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

In this scripture, Jesus clearly indicated

that he must have priority over every personal pleasure, purpose, or ambition. He clearly said, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

When a person yields himself to the will of Christ, he is not concerned primarily about material things. He is concerned about doing what his Lord commands.

A decision to give Christ priority over every pleasure, purpose, or ambition is a decision to go any length to do what Christ would have.

The measure of our dedication to our Lord is the cross. This means that we must be willing to go to whatever length is necessary to follow our Lord.

Communism with its tragic ideology calls men to make great sacrifices. We must see in our generation a fresh new demonstration of dedication to the will of Christ in order that the world may know that the answer to humanity's need is found in Jesus rather than in any other.

To give Christ priority where we are means that in every experience of life, in the home, at work, in our social relationships and wherever we are Christ must come first. The whole pattern of American living would be wondrously transformed if Christ should be given priority today.

"Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre." (John 20:3)

