

# Christian Growth 3

by Alan Redpath

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility as a key to spiritual maturity and living a life that is contrary to the world.*

**Duration:** 1:05:33

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:1

**Topics:** "Christian Growth"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of living a life under the control and authority of the Spirit of God. He emphasizes that the Christian life is not meant to be difficult, but rather a life of freedom in bondage to Christ. The sermon focuses on the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus expects his followers to live in humility and submission to his lordship. The speaker also expresses excitement for the potential of a spiritual awakening in these last days before Jesus comes again.

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## Transcript

Now let's turn to the word together, shall we? And tonight, we're going to read some verses in Matthew chapter 5, Matthew's gospel, chapter 5. Seeing the crowd, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophet who were before you. You are the salt of the earth. But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men.

This is the word of the Lord. Let's just bow for a moment of prayer, shall we? And be still in his presence and know that he is God, and ask him to remove anything that would hinder him speaking to us, and open

our hearts and make them tender to his truth. Speak, Lord, in the stillness while we wait on thee.

Hush our hearts to listen in expectancy. Speak, O blessed Master, in this quiet hour. Let us see thy face, Lord, and feel thy touch of power.

In Jesus' name, Amen. As you know, our theme this week is towards spiritual maturity. And in our first message, we ask ourselves in the presence of God, are we really prepared for him to go the whole way with us, to make us whole, to be filled with all the fullness of God? That is the ultimate in spiritual maturity.

Just to think that you and I may know that in our lives, the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of Jesus indwelling our hearts every day. And then we have been thinking, or started to think, about various areas in which that fullness, that spiritual maturity may be achieved. And various areas in which the Lord tests us and proves us.

We thought this morning about the area of faith. And this evening, we're going to think about the area of humility. I said to you, I think, this morning, that Jesus is exactly the opposite to all that we are.

And there's a wonderful thing about the Christian life, is learning day by day to draw on his resources, that it be no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And all his adequacy is mine. And I have but to learn, not to try and narrow the gap between what I am and what he is, but recognizing what I am and looking away from it.

I have to learn day by day to draw upon the opposite. And if there's one area more than others where that needs to be evident, it's in the area that we're thinking about tonight. For the basic problem in the world, of course, everywhere, is man's demand for his own independence.

That began with Adam, and it's been running at full tide ever since. A great big capital I at the center of our life, demanding our own rights, our own independence, and refusing to submit to the authority of God. And this is, of course, the reason why the world is in such a mess as it is right now.

Hundreds of millions of people, all seeking their own way. What a definition of sin it is in Isaiah 53. We all like sheep have gone astray.

Turn everyone to his own way. Our Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, we may not think our policies are right, always, but at least we give great respect to her when she said on television just recently, we can never have a perfect society as long as we're under the grip of original sin. Only a Christian could say that.

And we believe that too. But the great thing that you and I as believers have to demonstrate is what is life like once we have renounced our independence and taken up an attitude of dependence upon the Lord. That is Christian revolution.

A Christian is the greatest revolutionary in the world. Because human revolution cannot possibly achieve anything because it only starts at the periphery and never reaches the center. Christian revolution, on the other hand, commences at the center.

When I dethrone myself and enthrone Jesus, that's conversion. That's repentance. And no faith is worth anything unless it's backed by repentance and followed by obedience.

That's Christian living. And you and I as Christian people are called upon today in a crazy world to demonstrate what life is like under that new authority of Jesus as our Lord and Master. Matthew is the

gospel of the kingdom.

The gospel of the king. And in it there is an abundance of teaching for those who have yielded their lives to the authority of the king. So that in our day and age a new humanity may appear who have exchanged the slavery of living for themselves to the slavery of living for Christ.

Surrender their lives to his authority and his kingship and find in slavery to Jesus perfect freedom. The world is longing just for that, freedom. And you and I should have the answer, which simply is this, that you are never really free until you are not free to be free of God.

I'd better say that again. Sorry. You are never really free until you are not free to be free of God.

Life in bondage to Christ is freedom. Now this demands humility. And that's really the theme of our message this evening because we are told here in Matthew's gospel what kind of people Jesus expects his servants, his children to be who have entered the kingdom in submission to his lordship.

I think these are tremendous days in which to live. I'm excited with them. I believe that the Lord is just going to do new things.

And if only we give the Holy Spirit room and don't crowd him out with our programs and we give him elder room to work I believe we're on the verge of a great movement of spiritual awakening in these last days before Jesus comes. Tremendous opportunities for evangelism and outreach I am told, because this is the computer age that 50% of the people who have ever lived from creation 50% of that number are alive today. Half the number of people who have lived ever since creation are actually alive today.

And if everybody set out their hands and got into a line they would reach the moon and back three times. And at least three-fifths of those people have never heard about Jesus. There's more un-evangelized people alive today than ever before in history.

And in the absence of some traumatic event such as the return of our Lord the population will have doubled by the year 2000. Any conference which isn't specifically related to those facts is utterly irrelevant. I know you are.

That's why you exist as a fellowship. Because you have that concern that you might reach your neighbors and those who don't know the Lord with his saving message. One day, one day the Lord has told us that he's going to come and on that day there will be sheep and goats.

I wonder whether there will be more sheep or more goats. That's up to us. Tremendous responsibility in days like these.

Of course, we face tremendous, massive, imponderable things that confront us. There's a menace of communism more and more aggressive than ever. Unheard of, almost, before World War I. Now, two-thirds of the world population in its grip.

The tremendous growth of false religions. There are more Muslims than Methodists in Britain right now. And masks are everywhere.

What are we going to do about it? What do the people of Jesus want? Listen to him. Verse 13. You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? People are like salt. Salt has a tang. Salt stops corruption.

Salt spreads a flavor. And a Christian will be marked by a lifestyle that is utterly contrary to everything in society. It costs to live like that.

To be salt in the earth. Have you ever noticed that there are three references to salt that Jesus uses in the Gospels? And he uses them in the context of three different relationships which you and I have to maintain every day. A horizontal relationship with the world.

That's described in Matthew Chapter 5. A relationship with our fellow believers. That's in Mark Chapter 9. And a relationship with the Lord Jesus. That's in Luke Chapter 14.

And we're going to take a look at all these three areas. Because they're all marked by that word, humility. Let's look at the first one in Matthew Chapter 5. Of course, you all know that this is the opening of the Sermon on the Mount.

And you also know, I'm sure, that that sermon was not preached to unconverted people who didn't know God. It was preached to a little group of men whom he was training to be Christian leaders. First one, seeing the crowd, he went up on the mountain.

And when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them things. This, Sermon on the Mount, is a quality of life that you and I can live when we're living under the control and the authority of the Spirit of God.

A life absolutely impossible to our souls. People sometimes ask you, I'm sure they do me, Don't you find the Christian life difficult? And I answer them, No, I find it impossible. Absolutely impossible, but it's natural for the Holy Spirit to live within us.

And the purpose of God all through our lives is to make us naturally supernatural. And supernaturally natural. And therefore, we have in chapter 5, in the opening verses, what are called the Theatres.

The quality of life that Jesus expects from those who love him and follow him. And let me just give you one sentence comment, no time for more, on each of these Theatres. The Lord's definition of happiness, blessedness.

A sentence comment on all of them, and in fact, one rather more detailed comment on one of them. Listen. Blessed, or happy, are the poor in spirit.

In other words, they are to be humble, then self-competent. I'll give you just time to get that down. And the next one, an extraordinary definition.

Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be competent. In other words, better be sensitive than thick-skinned. Happy are the meek, better be gentle than push yourself.

Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, better be ambitious for goodness than for promotion. Happy are the merciful, better be kind to the needy than cultivate the rich. Happy are the pure in heart, better be open and honest than pull strings to get things done the way you want them.

Better be pure and honest, open and honest, than pull strings to get things done the way you want them. Blessed, or happy, are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Better to calm things down than to stick up to your own point of view.

Better to calm things down than to stick up to your own point of view. Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Happy are you when men revile you, persecute you, and are all kinds of evil against you, falsely on their account.

Better be an underdog than fight the system. You have a sort of view. A lifestyle absolutely contrary to everything that society knows today.

Let me ask you just to look for one moment at what I think is the most, almost contradictory, but extraordinary, the attitude of them all. And that's the second one. Happy are those who mourn.

Have you ever been to a funeral? I'm sure you have. Many of them. There are always two kinds of people at a funeral.

There are those who mourn, and there are spectators. A businessman dies, and his family meets at the funeral, and are brokenhearted. Also, there will attend that funeral members of his staff, friends.

Well, they're sorry about it all, but they're just spectating. There are some who mourn, and care, and are concerned. There are others who are there to give their respect.

And did you know that not only is that true of every funeral, it's true of every church? There are two types of people in that church from which you've come. There are those who mourn, those who care, those who are concerned, those who will get under the prayer burden, and those who seek to pray the pastor through, and there are those who couldn't care less. They sit like bumps on a log on Sunday morning, probably Sunday morning only, or evening only, and you'll never find them again all through the week.

Whenever there's a prayer meeting, they don't care. They're only there to criticize. People who care and are concerned, and people who couldn't care less.

And the second category breaks a pastor's heart. He misses and can't administer it, he's beaten. And once, when he and I were at Columbia Bible College, at a board meeting, and then subsequently at a meeting for the students, after that student's meeting, she and I were just jashing off to catch a plane somewhere, and a student came up to us, complete with notebooks and pens, ready to take down a great report of what we'd said.

And he said, "Excuse me, gentlemen, what would you say are the keys to Christian leadership?' We were all ready to take us down. If you know Stephen Offutt, you won't be surprised when I tell you that I couldn't get a word in anyways. And before I had a chance, he'd given them an answer.

Straight from the shoulder, straight from the heart, and said to him, "We've no time now to talk to you at length, but listen, I'll give you the clue. You want to know the keys to Christian leadership, I'll tell you. Bent knees, wet eyes, and a broken heart.

That's all he said. But that's all he needs to say. Happy, happy are those who mourn.

Blessed are those who mourn. The keys to Christian leadership. Not a great personality, not a great quick ability, not a tremendous number of theological degrees, but a broken heart.

Blessed are those who mourn. I think about our dear Lord, and I read in the Gospels that he often wept, wept over Jerusalem. How often would I if you would not? He often wept.

Yes, not only so, he was often angry, especially with religious professors. He was often weary, exhausted, hungry, thirsty. I never read of him laughing.

The laughter of God in the Bible is something else. It's the laughter of derision at the imagined power of his enemies. I never read of Jesus laughing.

And yet, for the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross and despised the shame. Therefore, if I would be thought as he was in society today, I will be sorrowful, but not miserable. I'll be serious, but not solemn.

My life should carry a fragrance with it, the fragrance of Jesus himself. The Living Bible puts verse 13 this way, You are the world's seasoning to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world? Has the salt lost its flavor in your life and mine, in our relationship to the world? Are you humble or self-confident? Are you sensitive or fixed in? Are you gentle or do you push yourself? Are you ambitious for goodness or promotion? Are you kind to the needy or do you cultivate the rich? Are you open and honest or do you pull strings to get things done your own way? Do you learn to calm things down or to stand up to your own point of view? Are you content to be an underdog or do you want to fight the system? See, humility, if I may define it, the real thing, humility is the ability to take hurt without resentment and it's the ability to submit to authority without reservation.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God. Our relationship to society. What a revolution there would be in the world to be accompanied by people who live and practice those principles.

Let me ask you to look for a moment at the second example in Mark, chapter 9. Mark, chapter 9. And at the last verse of the chapter. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves and, listen to this, be at peace with one another. Have you noticed the context in which the Lord makes that statement in the chapter? It begins with the record of the transfiguration of Christ where Peter, James, and John are taken up of the mountain apart by themselves and they saw Jesus only.

It tells us how they came down to the mountain and then they struck a very familiar scene. Verse 14. They came to the disciples and saw a great crowd about them and scribed arguing with them and, lo and behold, there was a father there who had a son possessed of demons and the disciples couldn't do a thing about it.

They were arguing with the religious authorities in the debate and a man whose knee was desperate remained unturned. Jesus dealt with the situation and then began to speak to his disciples about his plan of redemption in verse 30, 31. A son of man was delivered into the hands of men and they would kill him and when he was killed after three days he would arise.

But they didn't understand the saying and they were afraid to ask him. And when they came to Capernaum, verse 33, and when he was in the house he asked them What were you discussing? On the way they were silent. For on the way they discussed with one another who should be the greatest.

And to them, after the experience of the Mount of Transfiguration, so he taught them a lesson about greatness from the life of a little child. If anyone would be first he must be last of all and servant of all.

Whoever receives one such little child in my name receives me and whoever receives me receives not me but him who sent me.

And then suddenly John interrupts him. Verse 38 Teacher, we saw man casting out demons in your name and we forbade him. Because he wasn't following us.

Living Bible paraphrase. We saw man using your name to cast out demons but we told him not to because it didn't belong to our group. Ringing a bell.

Charismatic people down the road are getting a blessing. Poof! Kind of a thing to do. That denomination has suddenly struck oil.

Struck power. And they're breaking right through. But oh, people, we don't belong to that.

Very familiar language. And so Jesus gives them a tremendous lecture. Tremendous message.

In verse 42 onward. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he was thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, better for you to be... If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

Better for you to enter into life named and with two hands to go to hell. And so on. And in the end he says, salt is good.

But if salt has lost its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another. Live at peace with each other. My, what a word to the Christian church today.

I have been around quite a while now. I'm not living on borrowed time. I'm living on injury time.

Anybody who knows anything at all about football will know what injury time is. At least in associations, soccer. I can't remember about American football and it was quite understandable.

Because you never use your feet. You'll have to explain that to me one day. But in British football, so many minutes are added at the end of the game due to time lost on account of injury.

And a goal scored in injury time can turn defeat into victory. Well, I've been living on injury time for about five years and it's a thrilling time to live in because a goal scored in injury time can turn defeat into victory. I've been around a long while and I can honestly say to you I've never seen the church so fragmented as it is today.

So split on secondary issues. If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. And on that minimum of belief and faith and conviction, a man is a member of the body of Christ and I own, owe that man my love.

And he owes me his. Doctrines should never divide. Love should cover it all.

Forgive me if I use this as an illustration but as I believe his daughter is with us. When I was in Chicago, oh, years ago now, the great issue with which we evangelicals would be confronted was are you for or against Billy Graham. In some areas, if you are foreign, you're a liberal.

Simply because he was brave enough to invite men who were not evangelicals onto a platform so that they might get under the sample message and get converted. And so everybody used to say, are you for

Billy Graham or against him? Well, I have to be 100% foreign and was right behind that particular crusade in Chicago and for that I really took a liking. And some others of us did.

But nobody asks me that now. You know what they ask me? Are you charismatic? And do you know what I think? Of course I am, aren't you? What's the word mean? Grace gifts. And my brother and my sister, if you haven't got any grace and you haven't got any gifts, you're not even a Christian.

Why will the Church allow itself to be split over second yearship? Another great issue is, of course, the Lord's return. Are you pre-fabulation? Bratian? Or mid-fabulation? Or post-fabulation? Or our millennium? Or post-millennium? If you don't subscribe to our own particular point of view, we'll write you off. I know missionary societies.

I happen to be the president of one of them which was split in two from top to bottom simply because some missionaries were not prepared to take the pre-fabulation rapture. New point of the Lord's return. What difference does that make to crowds and millions of people who've never heard about Jesus on the mission field, who are in desperate need of salvation? Why should I withdraw myself or my support on that basis? Having stuck my neck out, I'd better just settle you down by telling you where I believe.

Not that it matters to you too much, but in case you think you've got someone who's right off track. Almost every day of my life I say, Lord Jesus, perhaps today, I believe he's coming soon. And the next dramatic event in the unfolding of the drama of redemption is that the Lord will come to his people and take them home to heaven and come back with them and reign with him in the millennium.

But of course, I know many people, I love them, who take a totally different point of view. One great friend of mine, whom you know by name, I'm sure, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, was in our millennium. And I listened to him preach with tremendous authority on that subject, from that viewpoint.

I can hardly wait for the day. But I'm not going to be so stupid or so wicked or such a tool in the hand of the devil to raise an issue like that. Why is the Church so fragmented? Why can't Christian people learn to disagree agreeably and not to break fellowship? Why must we go off and form another fundamental, Bible-believing Church, independent? Rather, we need that, another of those like we need a hole in the head.

This is satanic, the tremendous work of the devil, splitting the body of Christ, which should be marked by love. Why is it we're split on secondary issues? And why is it that we behave in our churches to each other as we do? The country of Scotland has quite a remarkable national motto. It's a thistle, which is a very prickly plant, and it's surrounded by a shield on which there are four words in Latin.

Nemo me impune lec esit. Nobody touches me with impunity. That's why Scottish troops always went into fight first in World War II.

Because if you get a Scotsman's heckle on your hands, you're in trouble. But we're all like that. So quick to criticize others, so quick to refuse the criticism of other people, so unready to listen, so hard to handle.

Would you ask me this? How in your church do you handle difficult people? You say we haven't any. Well, I don't want to contradict you or be rude, but you'll pardon me if I say I don't believe you. Till you get to heaven, you'll have difficult people to handle, and your reaction to them is a display of the true worth of your Christian testimony.

At Moody Church, we have some difficult people. Possibly I was the most difficult of them all. But of course, as a pastor, your problems all come to you, and they stop there.

And there was one man in particular who tested my sanctification. By every Sunday morning at about one minute to eleven, he came into the office from which I went into the pulpit. He just put his head round the corner and said, um, pulpit pastor, church half empty today, and he went out.

That didn't help. The church seated 4,200 people. 2,000 wasn't a bad crowd.

And anyway, without his interference, a little devil used to hop up out of the pew every Sunday morning out of every empty pew and sneer at me and tell me I was no good. I didn't need him to add fuel to the fire. But 30 seconds later, one of the elders of the church came in and came right into the office and put his hand, his arm, round my shoulder and said, wonderful pastor, the church is helpful today.

Both those men were saying the same thing. One with a view to raking me through and another with a view to encourage me. Which would you find was the easier to love? I don't need to answer that question, do I? My reaction to man number one was utterly contrary to what I preached.

Of course, I could find scriptural authority for it. Which you can find for any situation in a way that suits you as long as you take it out of its context. And I quickly recalled 1 Corinthians chapter 6 that there was such a one as the devil for the destruction of the flesh and the saving of the soul.

Thank you, Lord. That's what we'll do. Well, how will we do it? Well, you don't write letters from heaven, so I'll write him one.

And I did. And believe me, it blistered. I'm ashamed of it.

Get out of here. Get to some other fundamental church in Chicago and do your thing there. We can never have blessing with folks like you around, etc., etc.

I left that letter open on my study desk and my wife saw it and said to me, Don't you think we might have a little prayer about that before we go? I said, Oh, certainly, my dear. I've prayed about it for a long time. But still, if you'd like to join me, please do.

Let's kneel down and pray. And then I said, Now, you pray first. And I have never forgotten the next 10 or 15 minutes when she prayed not for that man, but for her husband.

And something happened that morning not for the man, but for the minister. The man didn't change a lot. He was never quite so tough, but he didn't change a lot.

But my attitude changed to him. And I had to write to him and apologize. And a year after we left the church and came back to Chicago, who should make us on the doorstep? It was that man.

He went up to my other wife and hugged her and kissed her. I didn't mind that. And when he finished with her, he came up to me and he said, Oh, Pastor, how we miss you.

I nearly said, I wish you'd said that to me five years ago. But you get the point? How do you handle difficult people? Do you want to get rid of them? Or do you realize that the Lord allows them to be there with you, that they may be the nails in his hands that drive you to calvary? I recommend your reading of Amy Carmichael's book, *Gold by Moonlight*, in which she tells the story of a pastor who was having a terrible

time, being criticized unkindly, his character being torn apart, utterly without a word of truth. It would easily be possible for him to have shifted to another church, but he didn't.

He stuck it and rode through the storm for years. One Sunday, a Sunday school teacher, who hadn't a pastor, the daughter of that pastor, said to her, Do you mind me asking you a question? How has all this criticism of your father reacted on him? And that child said, It has made it absolutely impossible for my daddy to say an unkind word about anybody. That's victory.

That's humility. A broken heart. My relationship to my fellow Christian, this is John Stott, speaking at a missionary meeting at Keswick some years ago, at the convention, to about a thousand missionaries, who said to them, I want to speak to you about your greatest problem.

And they all sat up, took notice, and said, How does he know? He said, Your greatest problem is your fellow missionary. And I want to give you the answer to that problem. It says, Treat every fellow missionary as though they were Jesus.

React to every fellow missionary as though you were Jesus. If you and I reacted like that, that would be the answer. How do I handle difficult people? Be at peace with one another.

And now our final look tonight at our relationship with the Lord Jesus. In Luke chapter 14, where our Lord has been spreading out the terms of discipleship, and says at verse 34, Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill. Men, throw it away.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Notice the context. Let's look at these terms of discipleship in the reverse order.

Verse 28. Which of you desiring to build a tower does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king going to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with 10,000 to meet him who comes against him with 20,000? And if not, while the other is yet a great wealth, he sends an embassy and asks terms of fees.

So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. You get a threat to that tremendous statement. Here's the Lord Jesus using this illustration.

He's a man building a house. And he builds it, and finds he hasn't enough bricks to complete it. What does he do? What's the answer? More bricks? Here's somebody going to war, one king against another king, and finds he hasn't got enough troops.

What's the answer? More troops? No. Nor is the answer more bricks. He that doesn't forsake all he has can't be my disciple.

No more bricks, but less. No more troops, but less. That your confidence might be switched from everything you have to everything I am.

He that does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. Does that mean the Lord's saying we've got to go around broke all the time? No. But I'll ask you a very rude question, and I'm sure you won't

answer it.

But I'll ask it. How much money have you got in your bank account? And if you answered that and said, oh, ten thousand, or somebody might say fifteen, or twenty, or thirty, I wouldn't be very impressed. But I might ask somebody else and say, how much money have you got in your bank account? Oh, there's thirty thousand dollars in the First National Bank in my name, but it all belongs to Jesus.

And I'm his steward. Not for a one-tenth, but for all of it. It's lent to me, and I'm responsible for faithful stewardship of it all.

Then I would know that man has learned humility in discipleship. All that he has belongs to Christ. And he has another name, verse twenty-seven.

Whosoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. What do you think it means to bear our cross? Some people have a very strange idea about that. A man came to me one day and said, I've got a terrible temper, but I suppose it's my cross.

I said, my brother, it's your wife's cross. It's not yours. She's got to live with it, poor soul.

If you are thin, you can get much change out of me, I'm afraid. What's my cross? Well, what was it to Jesus? He's done everything he had and could. Obeyed the Lord, obeyed his Father completely, and there remained only one thing to do.

It was to take his body and let it be crucified. That's his cross, and that's mine. God forbid that I should glory, say, on the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom I am crucified to the world and the world unto me, suppose.

What am I doing with my body? What am I doing with my body? Let me read you something, something that I got from, oh, the other day, well, I mean, that's an understatement, but two years ago, from Christianity Today. Listen. In the average Christian life of seventy, seventy-five years, we spend twenty-five years asleep, seventeen years at work, six years in travel, seven and a half years dressing, nine years watching television, six years eating, four years being sick, and six months in Bible study and prayer.

What am I doing with my body? Now, I'm not wanting to be an authority on this subject, but twenty-five years asleep, unconscious, flat out on my back, not knowing what on earth is happening, twenty-five years out of seventy-five, unconscious. That means I'm taking eight hours every day to be flat out. I never need an alarm clock.

I tell the Lord when I go to sleep to wake Him up. Seven hours later. And for years, He's never failed.

Sometimes a bit early. But had He wakened me up, He doesn't get me up. And the greatest thing, the thing that Christian people need is blanket victory.

Getting out from under them clothes and in my right mind, and around the Word of God in the presence of the Lord Jesus. My dear friend, I'm not a legalist, but I'm saying to you from experience that the man who cuts that out is in great danger of being on a collision course with God. What am I doing with my body? Oh, I recall football days, up every morning at half-past five, running for ten miles around the London suburbs.

At the end of the day in business, running for ten miles more on a running track twenty miles a day, five days a week. And then after finishing running, changing into football clothes, and pardon me mentioning that in rugby football in England we don't wear on a plate, we just have a sweater and pants and so on, and pushing with one shoulder hard against a brick wall, and then with another shoulder against another brick wall, push, push, push, for about half an hour until my shoulders screamed with agony. But I was determined that if anybody tackled me they would never want to do it again.

It worked. Oh, it was a hundred percent fit. I don't think there'd be anybody here or if there are, very few.

Keep it going until you're thirty. After that you're over the hill. But I did that for an earthly crown to be one hundred percent fit.

What do I do with Jesus? Lazy? Is it, pardon me, is it the temple of the Holy Spirit or a playground of the devil? What am I doing with my body? Whoever does not bear his own cross, discipline his body, crucify him in the power of the Holy Spirit and live in the power of the Lord Jesus. Have I learned to handle my body? And one other thing in relationship to the world and really this is quite fantastic. You believe you're Bible? Words for words? Well, can you explain this to me? If anyone comes to me and does not hate, hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yet, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Does anyone hate? Does not hate? Oh, what do we do when we confront a verse like that? Well, of course, we turn for commentary. And we'll find half a dozen of them. And I'll guarantee that most, if not all of them, will say, well, of course, that really means that your love for your family should be like hate compared with your love for Jesus.

That doesn't explain a thing. Explain it to the way. I'm not happy with that.

And I read it again. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father, mother, I mean, I believe it means exactly what it says. If only I understand the meaning of the Bible word hate.

The Lord chose Jacob and rejected Esau. And that's the Bible word for hate. He chooses one, rejects another.

Hate? Oh, that word means that the next step is murder. But if I take it in its Bible meaning, it means that I reject in favor of Jesus my wife, husband, father, mother, children. And he has priority over all.

To illustrate, he's a businessman in New York City. He's in business. And he goes to business at nine o'clock in the morning, eight o'clock, nine, what have you.

And he issues orders. He's a managing director. Of course, he's in private enterprise.

And things are done. And he has a short stop for lunch and issues more orders in the afternoon. And then at five o'clock he'll come home.

When he comes home, does he issue orders to his wife? He better not try. Does he handle his teenage children like that? He better not try. He'll be in trouble.

What does he do? I'll tell you what he does. He rejects his business wife. And in his place, he puts his wife and he loves like a husband.

And he puts his children and he loves them like a father. He rejects the one in favor of the other. And if anyone comes to me and doesn't reject, father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, yes, in his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Do you ever ask the Lord Jesus, Lord, please honor our marriage by helping yourself to any of our children at any time. The only happy home is the Christ-centered home. By Jesus as Lord and Master of all.

For he's honored in all our relationships. And it's the Lord who gives us our wives and our husbands and our families, they're gifts from heaven. And therefore because he gives them, he has a right to take them.

At any time, to step right into that home and help himself to wife, husband, children. Either to take them to be with him or to send them out to the uttermost parts of the earth and serve him. Have I acknowledged that? That spiritual maturity in the area of humanity which accepts the authority of Jesus without reservation.

Tell me, beloved, as a Christian leader in your city, to be taken up then, have I resolved in my relationship to the world, in my relationship to my church, in my relationship to my Lord, or has the salt lost its flavor and my Christian life gone stale? Let it be renewed today by giving Christ his rightful place and rejecting the dearest love, honor in his heaven. And that doesn't mean you love your husband or your wife any less. You love them all the more when Jesus is Lord.

Let's just pray, shall we? A moment's quiet prayer. And as our heads and hearts are bowed before God, I wonder if we might quietly sing together Spirit of the Living God, pour the flesh on me. Break me, melt me, mold me and fill me.

Spirit of the Living God, pour the flesh on me. Spirit of the Living God, pour the flesh on me. Do you answer that prayer, dear Lord? Thank you for the fragrance that will come through them to other people, the fragrance of the Lord Jesus.

This is what we are prepared to empty, that we may be salt in society, among our fellow Christians, and above all, in our relationship with you. Lord, may your smile be upon us tonight as we meet before you, conscious of our many failures, conscious that we fail so often to be what we should be, but eagerly praying that we may know that life in which the Spirit of God himself has taken over complete control. And Jesus is Lord.

We ask it in his dear name.

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