

An Address to the Young Convert -- the Higher Path

by Daniel Steele

Daniel Steele encourages young converts to choose the higher path of Christian living, characterized by love and joy in service to Christ.

Scripture: Romans 8:15, Galatians 5:1, Ephesians 3:19, Colossians 3:23, Hebrews 6:1, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Christian Living", "Sanctification"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the two orders of Christians: those who live a harmless life but do not actively fight for Christ's kingdom, and those who zealously pursue spiritual excellence and strive for the full mind of Christ. He emphasizes the importance of choosing the higher path of consecration and full salvation through Jesus' blood, rather than settling for a mediocre Christian life. Steele urges believers to walk in the way of God's commandments with love-service, like a volunteer soldier driven by love for his country, rather than a conscript driven by fear of the law.

Transcript

My Brother or Sister in Christ Jesus: permit an older soldier to offer a few words of advice to a new recruit in the army of the Lord. An ancient writer has wisely said, that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one live a harmless life, doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God, but waging no downright earnest warfare against the world, nor making strenuous efforts for the promotion of Christ's kingdom, nor aiming at special spiritual excellence, but at the average attainments of their neighbors. The other class of Christians not only abstain from every form of vice, but they are zealous of every kind of good works. They attend all the ordinances of God. They use all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ, and to walk in the very footsteps of their beloved Master. They unhesitatingly trample on every pleasure which disqualifies for the highest usefulness. They deny themselves, not only of indulgences expressly forbidden, but of those which by experience they have found to diminish their enjoyment of God. They take up their cross daily. At the morning's dawn they cry, "Glorify thyself in me this day, O blessed Jesus!" It is more than their meat and drink to do their heavenly Father's will. They are not Quietists, ever lingering in secret places delighting in the ecstasies of enraptured devotion; they go forth from the closet, as Moses came from the mount of God, with faces radiant with the divine glory; and, visiting the groveling and sensual, they prove by lip and life the divineness of the Gospel. Men tremble before them as Satan in Paradise Lost, when he first saw

the sinless pair in Eden, "trembled to behold how awful goodness is."

Next to the power of Jesus, the living Head, these earnest believers preserve and perpetuate the Church from age to age. The secret of their strength is, that they, by the guidance of the Spirit, found the King's highway up the summit of Christian holiness. They strove, they agonized to plant their feet on that sunlit height. They have left the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and have gone on to perfection.

They have accompanied St. Paul in his wonderful prayer in the third chapter of Ephesians, "till they know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," and are "filled with all the fullness of God." Says Mr. Wesley, whose greatness the Christian world is just beginning to appreciate,

From long experience and observation I am inclined to think that whoever finds redemption in the blood of Jesus -- whoever is justified -- has the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the 'more excellent way,' and incites him to walk therein -- to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way -- to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness -- after the entire image of God. But if he do not accept this offer he insensibly declines into the lower order of Christians; he still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life through the blood of the covenant.

This is on the condition that he is a persevering believer. But this lower path lies so near to the broad way, that many are almost insensibly lured into it, and go down to destruction with the thoughtless throng who enter in at the wide gate. Would you, young Christian friend, place the best possible safeguard against such a spiritual catastrophe? Take the higher path; consecrate all to Christ; seek full salvation through his blood, which cleanseth from all sin. This is the divinely-invented safeguard of the Christian life.

"Jesus, thine all-victorious love

Shed in my heart abroad;

Then shall my feet no longer rove,

Rooted and fixed in God."

These two paths lie before your feet, young convert. Choose you that one in which you will walk -- the higher or the lower, the safer or the more perilous. Let one who has tried both give you the benefit of his experience: --

The lower path seems easier, but in reality it is far more difficult. The sultry heat produces languor, and the noxious vapors induce stupor, making it exceedingly difficult to keep walking, even though the road is comparatively level. The beautiful bowers of ease tempt the drowsy traveler to lie down and sleep. To sleep is to lose heaven, as, alas! multitudes of the lower-path travelers have done.

Let their whitened bones, scattered along this path, be a warning to you to seek the upward path. It appears to be steep and rough; but the few who have tried agree in testifying that the atmosphere is so bracing and exhilarating that they seem to be lifted up the mountain by an invisible hand. Such a flood of life courses through their veins, such electric vigor shoots through their limbs, that they are not inclined to turn aside to the pleasure-arbors which Satan has unwisely located here and there near this way. The way itself is the highest pleasure on earth. The pilgrims run and are not weary. The Hebrew psalmist explains this paradox: "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou hast enlarged my heart." Along the

higher path the joy of the Holy Ghost pours, a river deep and wide; while along the lower it is a brooklet, more than half the year dried up by the torrid sun. Through the clear Italian atmosphere of the higher path, the celestial city is ever in view to the eye of faith; but clouds frequently settle down upon the pilgrims in the lower path, bringing perplexing doubts respecting the issue of their journey. The upward way leads to "an abundant entrance," while the pilgrims in the other road are haunted by distressing fears lest they shall come short of being even "scarcely saved."

Christian reader, a fellow-pilgrim to the New Jerusalem has had this experience in these paths. His testimony could be affirmed by many thousands, the brightest names that shine on the pages of Church history. Have such names as St. Paul, Madame Guyon, Fletcher, Bramwell, James Brainerd Taylor, no weight with you in deciding the question of which path?

Having chosen the higher path, do not be discouraged by the obstacles in the way of your entering and walking therein. You are not to remove them by your own strength. You have an almighty and complete Saviour, "able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him." With a submissive will and believing soul, "pray that you may know the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." Pray, and faint not. Take into your closet Charles Wesley's great dramatic lyric of a struggling and victorious soul, "Wrestling Jacob," and pray its words till the intensity of the expressions kindle your soul with earnestness and unconquerable persistence. Let your faith grasp some one of Christ's many precious promises, and use it as a key. Then will the iron gate across the king's highway swing back upon its hinges, and the path never trod by the lion's whelps shall lie before you.

Dropping all figurative language, let me say to you plainly, that you may enter upon the higher Christian life by simple faith in Jesus Christ as your complete Saviour. As you have received Jesus, so walk in him. You received him at the first by faith; you are to receive by faith "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Repentance was the indispensable condition of justifying faith; you could not believe without giving up your sins. Consecration is the necessary qualification for sanctifying faith; you cannot believe till you give up self.

But you may say, "I did this when I was converted." You then, like a conquered rebel, threw down your weapons and surrendered yourself as a prisoner of war. Now that you have been pardoned and made a citizen, Christ gives you the privilege of showing your loyalty to his government by pouring all your substance into his treasury as a freewill offering, and of volunteering soul and body in his conquering army. The difference between the two acts of consecration is the difference between surrendering with reluctance and volunteering with gladness. The subsequent service is marked by more or less servility in the one case and joyous freedom in the other. The one is a servant, the other is a son. It is true that all who are born into the divine family are sons by adoption; but many forget their sonship, and begin to work for wages. They become legal in spirit, trusting to the merit of their works, and thus put a yoke upon their necks. But the full measure of Christ's love, shed abroad by the Holy Spirit, makes free indeed. Service is no longer a drudgery, but a delight. The motive to obedience is no longer fear, but love -- not the dread of the law, but affection toward the Lawgiver.

Let me illustrate the difference between law-service and love-service by the conscript and the volunteer soldier. The impulse which thrusts the former into the field is fear of the law reinforcing his feeble patriotism. When the news comes that his name has been drawn out from the wheel of fortune, and that the strong arm of the law has seized him to push him into the front of the battle, his cheeks turn pale and his heart sinks within him. Nevertheless, he puts on the military uniform, and shoulders his knapsack,

though it seems to weigh a ton.

Reluctantly he leaves the old homestead, and wearily journeys to the conscript camp, strongly tempted to slip away from the officer and escape from the country; but the fear of the law, and his weak love for his native land, overcome this temptation. He murmurs at the hardness of his rations, discomforts of the camp, the severity of the discipline. Yet he bravely does his duty. The law, like a bayonet behind him, drives him into the battle, where he fights like a hero. Yet he does not enjoy the privations and perils of the service.

He cannot overcome its irksomeness. Every hour he wishes that he could avoid the disagreeable duties of a soldier's life. He sees the volunteer enduring the weary marches with patriot songs, and with cheerful smiles rushing into battle as to a banquet. He sees him brought back mortally wounded, borne on a stretcher, blessing the old flag of his regiment as it fades away from his glassy eye, thanking God for a country worth bleeding and dying for. The conscript notes with shame the contrast between the spirit of this volunteer and his own cold, apathetic, reluctant service, and hides his blushing face from his comrades with the earnest, unspoken prayer for the inspiration of nobler feelings toward his country.

Let us suppose that the prayer of the conscript is heard, and that a baptism of patriotism descends upon his soul. Now his country stands before him as the chief among ten thousand nations, and altogether lovely. He gladly grasps his rifle and runs with eager delight to the thickest of the fight to drive back the rebels who are trampling beneath their feet the glorious old flag, the emblem of the object dearest to his heart, and for the honor of which he would gladly pour out his heart's blood.

He has passed through a crisis in his military life. A new motive power has taken up its abode behind his will -- love instead of fear -- and it throws a halo about the hardest tasks, changes suffering into enjoyment, and transfigures death itself into an envied martyrdom. He is a new man. The temptation to desert, which once cost him a struggle to resist, never troubles him now. His rations are wondrously palatable, and his knapsack is a softer bolster for his head as he sweetly slumbers between the cornhills, than the downy pillow awaiting his return in his distant home.

He has found out the secret that love knows no burdens, feels no hardships, in the service of its object. If the term for which he is drafted should expire today, instead of throwing up his cap for joy he would find a recruiting officer and re-enlist for the whole war, bounty or no bounty, for he means to fight till the last rebel lays down his arms, and the land of his fathers is redeemed.

Now, my young friend, do you see the point of this illustration? There are multitudes of conscript Christians pressed into Christ's army by the constraint of the law. They render acceptable service, and will be rewarded for their fidelity, as the grateful country gives pensions alike to the drafted and volunteer soldier, and indiscriminately decorates their graves. But the volunteer enjoyed his service, finding the battle-field a delight because it afforded him an opportunity to suffer for his loved country, while the conscript, just as faithful in the outward act of obedience, never tasted joy in his irksome toils and sacrifices. Which kind of a Christian do you choose to be? You may serve all your life under the constraint of law, or you may serve with gladness in the way of God's commandments under the mighty impulse of love, perfect love, which casteth out all servile, tormenting fear.

These are the two ways of Christian living -- the lower and the higher path. Every consideration of greater usefulness, greater happiness, greater security, and, above all, greater glory to the blessed Lord Jesus, should constrain you to seek the higher path.

"If our love were but more simple,
We would take him at his word;
And our lives would be all sunshine,
In the sweetness of the Lord."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/daniel-steele/an-address-to-the-young-convert-the-higher-path/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net