

Freedom From Vanity

by Richard E. Bieber

Freedom from vanity is achieved through identification with Christ's cross and living under the power of the cross.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:3, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 3:3, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Dying To Self", "Sacrificial Living"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the danger of vanity in the Christian walk, emphasizing the need to die to self and live a life hidden with Christ in God. He warns against seeking recognition and admiration from others, as it hinders the power of God from working through us. Bieber highlights the importance of taking our vanity to the cross, surrendering it to Jesus' blood, and embracing a life poured out for God alone, mirroring the sacrificial love of Christ.

Transcript

For you have died, and your life
is hid with Christ in God. When
Christ who is our life appears,
then you also will appear with
him in glory.

When Christ appears then you will appear with him in
glory. Until then, your life is hid with Christ in
God. And only when our lives are hid, covered, so that
human eyes go right by us and cannot see the glory of
God resting on us, only then is God's power safe in our
hands.

Most of us don't want to pay the price of living a life that is hid with Christ in God. We want to be seen, and known, and loved, and admired, by the eyes of men. And this is why time and time again we burn out before we ever really get going as God's servants.

I'll never forget the day when I was a small child and some big kids in the neighborhood came down the street pushing a motorcycle they found alley-picking.

It had no paint left on it, just dried up grease. How they worked on that thing as all of us little kids stood around and watched. Finally came the big moment to start it. For a few seconds it sounded like it might be a motorcycle after all, but then the motor died away. Again and again they got it to sputter and bang but it never kept going.

They pushed it, jumped on it, rode it down the hill, but it wouldn't keep going.

They never did get that motorcycle to work.

To this day, we don't know what was wrong with that motorcycle. But there's no doubt about the problem which causes us to die out in the same way again and again. It's our vanity.

We start bearing a little fruit. We pray for somebody

who's sick, or speak the word just at the right moment to somebody who's hungry for God. God touches that life. We see that person come into the Kingdom. And right away we're wanting it to be known that God did this thing through us. And the minute vanity gets hold of us, our effectiveness as servants of God begins to fade. If our fellowship begins to grow, naturally we're pleased. But if we aren't careful, our hearts are soon more taken up with the success of our fellowship than with that lost sheep out there who needs to be found, or that wounded one who needs care.

Next thing you know, we're going through religious motions but the healing touch is no longer with us.

Don't think it's just the famous Christian celebrities who fall into the trap of vanity. We look at some charlatan who has himself billed as "God's man for the hour," and wonder where he gets the nerve to be so gross. Is there no fear of God left in the man? Doesn't he realize he's going to answer for this deceit?

And even while we're looking down our noses at him, we're doing exactly the same thing in our own little circle. We're playing the role of St. Francis before the eyes of men instead of God, and grieving God's Spirit.

Why does every victory,
every sign of progress,
every beautiful start,

every glorious miracle that comes through our
ministry have to go to our head? Is there no way we can
get clear of this disease?

We know our Lord stressed, as lesson number one, for any
one who wanted to follow Him.... that vanity has to go.

There is no way we can keep our vanity and walk with Him.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs
is the Kingdom of heaven.

Unless you turn and become as a little child
you will in no wise enter the Kingdom of heaven.

He who humbles himself shall be exalted, and
he who exalts himself shall be abased.

But how are we going to get rid of vanity? ,

We can resolve to be humble. What good does that do?

We can climb down off our pedestal today, by tomorrow
night we're right back up there again.

- The first whiff of success, and we're off
on another ego trip.

- The first little defeat, we're going to
pick up our toys and quit.

But there is a way, and we can see it as we look at
Jesus riding the donkey into Jerusalem - no man, not
even David, ever received a welcome like this. Yet,
not a trace of vanity touches Him as that crowd shouts,
"Hosannah."

Jesus is completely sane;
sure,

undistracted by all this acclaim

because He knows He's on His way to death. Jesus can see the cross at the end of the road, and that cross preserves Him in the midst of temptations you and I can't even begin to imagine.

He knows that He came to this earth for one reason only: to die.

- Not to become a smashing success.
- Not to establish Himself as a healer.
- Not to be the greatest teacher of all time.
- But to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So they can shout Hosanna at the top of their lungs.

They can praise Him,

blame Him,

slander Him,

hate Him,

spit on Him,

whip Him,

mock Him. It doesn't make any difference.

Jesus knows exactly what His job is if a single member of the human race is ever to be saved from wrath.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

But was the cross only for Him?

"If any one serves me, he must follow me, and where I am, there shall my servant be

also."

What makes us think we can follow Jesus the healer,

Jesus the teacher,

Jesus the Palm Sunday

hero, and then drop back and take some other road when

He turns out to be the Lamb of God dying for the sins

of the world?

Don't we understand that the power that

- rests on Jesus when He heals,

- anoints Jesus when He teaches,

- envelopes Jesus on Palm Sunday,

is the power of His approaching death? Until we accept

this, with all our hearts, and bring our lives under the

power of that death, we will forever - and I mean forever- __

be slaves of our own vanity.

You have died - your life is hid with Christ

in God.

We ought to know by now that our starting point, as

Jesus' followers, is His cross. That's where our

break with vanity begins - because we died to it.

What do we mean when we say, "Jesus died for our sins?"

If Jesus died for our sins on that cross, He died not

only for our sins of murder,

adultery,

debauchery,

drunkenness,

lies and filth, He died also,

yea, especially, for our sin of vanity,
self-righteousness,
self-centeredness.

- He atoned for it.
- He took it down into death with Him.
- He carried it right out of this world with Him.

Well, if Jesus died for this thing,

- How come it's still hanging us up?
- How come it's still cursing our lives?
- How come we're still lusting after glory?

Because we haven't taken it to the cross and dumped it,
we haven't given it over to Him,
we haven't relinquished it to His blood.

You took your wicked past to the cross and were set free,
but you never took your vanity there and held it under
the blood until it was dead.

Our starting point is the cross of Jesus, and our destination is a cross of our own.

"If any man would come after me, let him
deny himself, take up his cross, daily,
and follow me."

And what do you think you're going to do with this cross
you pick up every day and carry behind Jesus? Hang it
up on the wall for decoration? Man, you're going to die
on it!

"That I may know him in the fellowship of
his sufferings and be made like him in his

death."

Our goal is not greater and greater success,
more and more acclaim among our Christian friends.

Our goal is a death that will somehow be like His.

A life poured out.

A life willingly given.

A life spent for God alone, until there's nothing
left and the flame goes out.

And, if as we journey toward our cross we should somehow
become popular with men, we know that it's a mistake,
we know that popularity will
soon turn into hatred, even as those hosannas turned
to cries for His blood.

And finally, we ought to know by now that every day we
live, until our lives are completely poured out, is to
be lived under the power of the cross of Christ.

- Death works in us so that life can work
in the people to whom we minister.

- Thorns in the flesh press down on us and
make us weak so that power moves out of
these weak vessels of our bodies to heal
and save in Jesus' name.

We begin to see the afflictions,
and the pressures,
and the hardships,
and the unfair things that happen, as agents
of the cross working death in us that life might flow

out in the name of the Lamb of God.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

And we don't get sour and cynical in the midst of this pain, we bear fruit that abides. And we don't burn out, we keep right on going as men and women who now have begun to experience freedom from vanity.

- We're free because we've died.

- We're free because our lives are hid with Christ in God.

- We're free because we're satisfied to let God's glory in us remain hidden even while His light shines forth from us mysteriously causing men to glorify Him.

Do you really believe that you have died with Him?

That your life is hid with Christ in God?

Are you satisfied to wait until Christ, who is our life, appears, before you appear with Him in glory?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/freedom-from-vanity/>

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