

Entirely His 8-12-01

Mark 8:34-35 (NIV)<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.<sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Mark 12:28-30 (NIV)<sup>28</sup> One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"<sup>29</sup> "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'<sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

There is a demand from God for our whole heart. He doesn't want priority in your life, He wants to be your life. There is a big difference, but most will only settle for priority or worse yet, the backup-plan. The command to love Him with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength is not a request. The word 'all' does not mean the biggest portion, it means the whole portion. Jesus said that was the greatest of all of God's laws. In fact all the Law was summed up in that expression Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6. Everything God desires of you, everything his righteousness demands, revolves around you being entirely His.

He asks that of us because that is what we are made for. If we see all that God is, we realize to love Him is to love truth, to love justice, to love all that his very nature is. It is only right that we love Him with our all. If someone gave you everything you possess, watched out for you, was honest with you, and loved you enough to die for you, would it be anything less than selfish ingratitude if you did not return that love or were casual about it? Once we get a glimpse of the greatness of God's goodness and love toward us we realize we are indebted to return that love.

Psalms 29:2 (KJV)<sup>2</sup> Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

"Due", we owe it, because all we have and are comes from Him. Psalms 16:2 (NIV)  
<sup>2</sup> I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." Outside of Him there is nothing of any value. In Him is all goodness. He deserves our love and adoration just because He is who He is. If it was possible to have life that did not come from Him (it is not) we would still be right to love and adore Him because of who He is.

And so we are commanded to love the LORD our God with our all. We should not hold back any portion of our being from loving Him. Actually, it is either ignorance or sheer arrogance that would have us withhold any thing from a God so loving and generous, so gracious and good. For in loving Him we find all our needs met, our heart filled, purpose and peace. In loving Him we find anything and everything of eternal value.

But in me, that is in my flesh dwells not good thing. I have the germ that Satan conceived, "I will! I want. I demand." I'm infected with self-love. All my rebellion along this line says God is a liar and I know better. In my heart I think, "If I eat of what He

has forbidden it is not death. The wages of sin is not death, I can get away with it and prosper and enjoy. This little sin I will not yield for I find pleasure in it! I know I have argued with the Spirit many times and I am winning the argument. I can tell I'm winning because my conscience doesn't bother me as much as it used to." Yes, I am winning and in doing so I am losing of the goodness God had in store for me. It is true there is pleasure in sin, for a time. But the reason God calls us entirely to Himself, which is away from sin, is that its wages is death. What a gracious God to call me and when I am so full of this twisted thinking, when I am so ungrateful for all He has given and continues to give me daily.

My personal studies are in Jeremiah and I am at the point where the nation of Judah was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. (Jer 44) The remnant of poor left in Jerusalem experience a violent coup. Then they are rescued from the hands of this cruel man who wanted to be king. Now they don't know what to do and so they ask Jeremiah to seek the Lord. After all, everything he told them came true. They vow before God that whatever he hears they will do. Ten days later Jeremiah gets the answer (God answers when He is ready and it is always the perfect time). They want to go to Egypt because they think Babylon won't understand what has happened. God says, "don't go to Egypt, stay there in Jerusalem and Babylon will understand. But if you go to Egypt you will die there."

So what do they do? You probably guessed it, they go to Egypt, and force Jeremiah to come with them. Jeremiah prophesies that Babylon will come and conquer Egypt and kill them with sword and famine because they are burning incense to the Egyptian gods and the Queen of Heaven. Their reply, "We will not listen or pay attention to you. All our troubles came when we quit worshipping idols." Jeremiah says, "Man, have you got it twisted. All along, God said He would have to judge you if you kept up the idolatry and so He did. But since you are so determined, go ahead, but know this, you are as good as dead."

We think, "What is wrong with those idiots!" Same thing that is wrong with you and me. We think we know better. We think we can keep some corner of our heart, some secret thoughts, some sin no one knows, some vile contemplation and it won't end in death. That is exalting self over God and refusing to obey the Great Commandment. We have to come to the point where we say, I know that in me, that is in my flesh dwells NO good thing. God is looking for a total abandoning of ourselves to Him and He deserves no less. And so the Apostle Paul pleads with us, begs us, because of God's great mercy offered to us to put ourselves on the heavenly altar, a living sacrifice. That we hear that call is great mercy because not only do we not deserve all the goodness God has for us, we deserve his wrath. Instead I get the offer to be a servant because Jesus took the wrath in my place. Now remember, in the upside down world of the Kingdom, to be a servant means to be truly great.

He even wants me to abandon my good works, my good plans, my good dreams, because they are of me. His are infinitely better. His bear eternal fruit. His have substance and meaning. 1Cor 13 tells us we can do all kinds of wonderful things, speaking angelic language, giving up our possessions, giving up our body to the fire, full of wisdom and knowledge, but if the source is not love, it is nothing. He is not asking you what you are doing, but who is the source? Who is doing it? No wonder I have to

take up the cross and follow. I have to come to the point where I realize all that is in me must die on the cross with Christ so the life of Christ can be manifest in me. I must realize I cannot live the Christian life, Christ must be that life in me. If I asked you who you would rather have people see, you or Jesus, you would surely say Jesus. And yet day after day we present self to the world. What can we do? Take up the cross!

Gal 6:14-15 (NLT)<sup>14</sup> As for me, God forbid that I should boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world died long ago, and the world's interest in me is also long dead.<sup>15</sup> It doesn't make any difference now whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we really have been changed into new and different people.

"My interest in the world died long ago." Keep in mind Paul's interest in the world was about keeping the law, doing good things, religious things, things like killing those heretics that said the Messiah was that Jesus of Nazareth. Paul really thought he was serving God. He thought God would reward him for hunting down Christians. When He met Jesus on the road to Damascus and asked who that bright light was, the answer must of ripped his heart out. "I am Jesus who you are persecuting!" Paul was sincere, just sincerely wrong.

It took him 3 years in the desert of Arabia to see his service to God had been an interest in the world, it was his way not God's. It was Paul's religious flesh not the life of Jesus. He had to face it, to forsake it, and to let Christ be his life. His achievements and diplomas, his great knowledge of the Word, all that he could boast in he finally realized was garbage. What did he have left after the realization that he did his very best and it was totally wrong? The cross of Jesus was all he had, but to him that was great treasure. It meant the end of self, the end of misplaced zeal for God. Why? Because in the cross he can say it is no longer his life, it is Christ's within him. Before he acts or speaks he yields to that life. When he responds to needs in the churches, he writes from that life. It is as Jesus said, "A well of water springing up from within."

The cross isn't something he complains about, "oh, I desire this thing, but I can't have it because I'm a Christian". No, he boasts about it. "I died! So Christ can live in me, so the world can see Jesus in me." **Before we can go on to maturity we must first come to this place of total surrender, of being entirely his. We must ask ourselves if there is any place within us for anything other than Christ.** Do I argue with the Spirit about some portion of my life? Here I cannot be specific for what He forbids me to do he may allow you to do because it does not tempt you or turn you to reliance on self. If it is there you are probably aware of it. As we said two weeks ago, it acts as a veil over your face keeping you from seeing the glory of God in the face of Christ more clearly. It allows you to continue to rely on your own ability, your own strength, your own priorities, that are not those of the Spirit of God within you.

There has to come an utter forsaking of that thing. Jesus said, "Does your right eye offend you? Pluck it out!" You must cut it out of your life because you see it hinders your vision of Christ. When you do, you will find the Word of God opens up, your ears open up to hearing the Spirit, your eyes open up to seeing his work all around you. Why cling to death when the Spirit is offering you life? Oswald Chambers called it being Abandoned to God.

For many of you this is review, but we need to review it. Peter needed Paul to review it for him. Peter saw the sheet come down from heaven with the unclean animals. He knew what God cleansed he was not to call common. Yet peer pressure cause him to separate himself from the Gentiles and eat according to Jewish law. There was nothing wrong with sitting and eating with those Jewish brothers, but there was something terribly wrong with Peter's heart that disobeyed the Holy Spirit. Peter was worried about his reputation, concerned what the legalists would say. Were people seeing Jesus or Peter? Jesus made himself of no reputation. He ate with the prostitute and tax collector and Peter saw that humble example. He needed a reminder, it's not about me, it's about Jesus.

**To go on to maturity we must know we are entirely his and have a will that says, "If in anything I find I am not entirely His, by his grace I will surrender it immediately".** It will cost you. Some of us have paid dearly and found we were investing in deceit. That makes you cautious about investing again. That is not bad, that is learning wisdom. But if we make it an excuse to hold back for fear of pain and loss, we do so at our own expense. When He allows us to fail, to make decisions that end in suffering, He does so to lead us to the end of ourselves, for it is there we take up the cross and let Jesus become our life.

If you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, God sees you in his Son. He sees the work complete, the righteousness of Christ in your place. He says, the old has gone and the new has come. He sees you clothed in glory. We must begin to see as Christ sees. Instead of being discouraged when we fail, we should rejoice that He has revealed a weakness and we can move forward in the refining process. 1 John 3:2-3 (NIV)<sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.<sup>3</sup> Everyone who has this hope (the hope of being like Him) in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. He started the work of changing us into his image. He is completing it daily in our lives. The Father sees the final product his Son is making – the likeness of his own Son in you.

We allow the failures to make us aware of our life outside Him so we can surrender them up until for us to live is Christ. We purify ourselves continually, laying down our will and taking up the cross. With all confidence in Him we can say the Temple will be completed! I am a new Creation, by faith in His excellent craftsmanship. As long as the material is yielded in his hands, the work will be completed. **Be entirely, unreservedly His. Will you surrender all to Him? Then will you let God purify you daily until everything with you is only Christ?**