

Desiring Christ above all

Why do people resist surrendering themselves to Christ? For many, the reason they give is that they don't really trust God to handle their lives to their suiting. A young lady stood talking to an evangelist on the subject of consecration, of giving herself wholly to God. She said, "I dare not give myself wholly to the Lord, for fear He will send me out to China as a missionary." The evangelist said, "If some cold, snowy morning a little bird should come, half-frozen, pecking at your window, and you would let you take it in and feed it, thereby putting itself entirely in your power, what would you do? Would you grip it in your hand and crush it? Or would you give it shelter, warmth, food, and care?" A new light came into the girl's eyes. She said, "Oh, now I see, I see. I can trust God!" Two years later she again met the evangelist and recalled to him the incident. She told of how she had finally abandoned herself to God—and then her face lit up with a smile and said, "And do you know where God is going to let me serve Him?" And there was now a twinkle in her eye— "In China!"

Philippians 3: 1 – 11

1) Rejoice in the Lord

- Paul exhorts the believers to rejoice in the Lord.
- Rejoicing is a theme that permeated the whole letter to the Philippian church
- We are not told to rejoice in the work that we do or because of who we are, or in something good that has happened to us
- Our joy is in the Lord – in Jesus
- Our joy is not in what we can get from Him but in Him alone. In our relationship with Him
 - Isaiah 61: 10 I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
 - Our joy is as a bride getting ready for her marriage and we are the bride of Christ and He is the bridegroom
 - Salvation is not about getting us to heaven but reconciling us with God so that we can have a relationship with Him
 - His robes of righteousness that He gives us at salvation are wedding clothes
- God is the one who looked at us and delighted in us reaching out to us that we might have this eternal relationship with Him
 - Isaiah 62: 5 As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.
 - God rejoices over us as a bridegroom rejoices over His bride
 - We rejoice in the fact that God wants this relationship more than we do and that He will sustain it with all His might because He delights in us.

2) The distractions from our relationship with Christ

- Paul was concerned about preachers preaching that the believers need to follow the Law and besides following Jesus
- He is very strong in his language calling them dogs, men who do evil and mutilators of the flesh
- When he wrote to the church in Galatia he strongly condemned such people
 - Galatians 1: 6 – 8 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"
- Writing to the church in Corinth he spoke about these people leading the believers astray from Christ

- 2 Corinthians 11: 3 “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”
- When additional requirements to Jesus are added to salvation and our Christian walk it distracts us from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ
- It starts putting importance on other things rather than on Jesus
- Importance is put on:
 - Keeping the law e.g. circumcision
 - In Christ our hearts have been circumcised
 - Colossians 2: 11 “In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ”
 - Our natural heritage
 - We may have been born into a Christian home but that doesn't give a relationship with Jesus
 - Our natural abilities
 - How often we hear people speak of a dynamic person saying what a good Christian he will make if he comes to Christ
 - That dynamic personality needs to die when he comes to Christ that he can put his confidence in Christ not in his natural abilities
- Other things that can distract us from our relationship with Jesus if not submitted to His will:
 - Our career
 - Our studies
 - Our hobbies
 - Our homes
 - Our social life
- When we put the focus on what we can do and where we come from then our focus is on us and not on Jesus

3) A Sacrificial desire for Christ

- We ought to ask ourselves how much we desire to know Christ
- Do we desire to know him above all else to the point that we will sacrifice anything that is dear to us for the sake of knowing him?
- Paul considered all that was to his gain a loss to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus
 - Paul had seen Jesus and knew that there is nothing in this world that compares to knowing him
- Have we really seen Jesus through faith as the girl in the story at the beginning that all our fears will be dispelled because we know that the one who we love loves us more and he will sustain, protect and provide for us and give us far better riches than we ever give up for him?
- Have we really drawn close to him to realise that we don't need to attain righteousness by our own self effort in keeping the Law but that all is fulfilled in Him?
- Do we want to know the power of His resurrection at work in us in the present?
 - Then we need to draw close to Him to experience His life in us.
 - We also need to be willing to know the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings if we want to experience His resurrection power. There is no resurrection unless there is death.
- In drawing close to Him and knowing Him in relationship we become like Him in His death
 - Death works in us and the character of Christ is formed in us
- Do we desire Christ above all else?