Mark - Commentaries by Walter Thomas Prideaux Wolston

Simon Peter: His Life and Letters, Companionship With Christ

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Mark 1:27-28; Mark 3:13-19

The next thing we find in the gospel narrative, as we pursue Peter's history, is that the Lord enters his house at a most opportune juncture. He comes out of the synagogue, where He had just been casting an unclean spirit out of a man, and forthwith (a characteristic word of Mark's gospel) He goes to Peter's house, and "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever," and they tell Him of her. It was most natural that they should tell the Lord of the sick woman, and He heals her with a word.

Now, it has often been taught that a man must remain unmarried in order to fully follow the Lord; but here we learn that Simon was a married man, and he was a man who had affections large enough to take in his wife's mother, not only into his heart but into his house. We live in a day when mothers-in-law are often at a discount; not so here, and God has not recorded this in the pages of His Word for nothing.

I have no doubt Peter's wife was in a tremor that day. Her mother, possibly (for we do not read of children) the dearest object, save her husband, that she had in the world, lay sick of a fever. Another gospel (Luke 4:38) says, she was "taken with a great fever." But Jesus "stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her;" and He "took her by the hand, and lifted her up," and "she ministered unto them," instead of being ministered to. She was a useful mother-in-law that.

Do you think it was by chance that the Lord went there that day? I believe not. If we go back a few days in Peter's history, we remember that he had given up all to follow the Lord; and having abandoned his earthly calling so to do, it is quite possible that his wife might have felt somewhat anxious as to ways and means, and may have thought, if she did not say, "How are we now to be cared for and supported?" The Lord comes into her house — her home; takes her mother by the hand, and heals her with a word; and as the loving daughter sees the mother healed and restored, she must have felt quite assured as to the wisdom of her husband's action in fully following the Lord. And I doubt not, before Peter left again to accompany his Master in His labors, he got a word of this sort from his wife, "You follow Him fully, Simon; I see well you are on the right track; He has the heart and the power to care for us in all things."

This scene is so like the Lord. He ever loves to put His servants at rest at home, as well as to set them free to follow Him. It is sweet to think that He has His eye on the ofttimes solitary wife at home, with her cares and burdens, while the husband, called to labor in public, is frequently and necessarily away. Ye wives of evangelists, and other servants of the Lord, note how the Lord thinks of you!

Passing on now to the third chapter of Mark, we find the special call which Peter received of the Lord. After a night spent in prayer (see Luke 6:12), the Lord selects those who should be His companions in His pilgrim pathway here. We read, "He ordained twelve, that THEY SHOULD BE WITH HIM." I know nothing more blessed than that!

People think it is a wonderful thing to be saved, to escape the damnation of hell — a wonderful thing to go to heaven; and so it is. But to go to heaven in Scripture, is always to be with a Person. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord" — "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better" — is the language of Scripture.

To be with Him, to enjoy companionship with the Lord Jesus Christ, is what God calls us to; and here these men, in a very special way, were called to be with Him. Have you been called to be with Him, my reader? You are not called to be an apostle, but the eternity of a Christian is to be with Jesus. But for you, my unconverted friend, what is your eternity? To be with Jesus? Alas! you do not know him. To be in glory? You have no title to it! Your future is very different. I fear there will fall on your ears a sadly solemn word, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Perhaps you say, I do not believe God ever made hell for man. Nor do I. The Lord Jesus says it was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). But some men are such fools they prefer the company of the devil and his angels to the company of Christ. See where you stand, my unconverted reader, and think of the contrast between your portion and that of the true follower of Jesus.

"He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him." "Ah! but," you say, "one was a traitor." Well, do not you be a traitor! God help you, and me too, not to be traitors] Judas's history has its lessons for all of us. It is like a beacon light put on a dangerous coast, to keep the watchful mariner off the sunken rocks — to teach our souls to be in no wise like him.

In this place, again (Mark 3:16), you get Simon's new name emphasized, and in all the gospels it is so. His name always comes first on the list (see Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; John 21:2); not that he had any authority over his brethren, or was made a sort of primate, as Rome would fain teach us. It was his natural fervor, and warm-hearted impulsive earnestness, that put him always in the front rank. If there be a query, Peter most usually puts it; if it be a confession of who the Lord is, Peter is the spokesman. I grant you his vary impulsiveness drew him ofttimes into danger, and ended in his denying his Lord at a later date; but still Peter's is a wonderful history of devotion to the Lord, and where he failed, the Lord, in infinite wisdom and faithfulness, tells us about it, and puts him too before us as another beacon light, lest our small barks should also be stranded on the selfsame rocks that damaged his.

Nothing but devotion of heart to Christ personally will do for us. A mere creed is of no value whatever. Unless there be affection of heart that puts us near Himself, and, if we have got away, leads us back to Him as quickly as possible, our confession of Him is valueless to us, and

nauseous to Him. Peter learned a blessed lesson at this point of his history, namely, The Lord wants me to be with Him — He wants my company. Have you learned yet, dear reader, that the Lord loves your companionship, and desires to have your affections?

But besides the thought of companionship, there was another purpose in the Lord's mind as He drew the twelve around Him. Luke's record of the event runs thus: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles; Simon (whom he also named Peter)" (Luke 6:12-14). Turning to Mark we read, "And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. And Simon He surnamed Peter" (Mark 3:14-16).

This is intensely interesting. Notice the prelude to the selection. He, who was Lord of all, and knew all, "continued all night in prayer to God" before He selects His companions, and ordains His apostles. What a lesson to us all of dependence on God. This is only recorded by Luke, who gives us the pathway of the perfectly dependent man. We are not surprised, therefore, though deeply instructed thereby, to find the Lord bowed in prayer seven times in that gospel (Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18-29; 11:1; 22:41). Each occasion has its own peculiar lesson for our hearts.

Here then we get Simon's new name (Peter) confirmed, his apostolic call declared, and at the same time we receive instruction as to the meaning of the term "apostle." Jesus so named the twelve, Luke tells us; and Mark adds the explanation, "that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." How comprehensive is apostolic work — to preach God, to heal man, and to defeat the devil. No wonder Satan did his best to trip up the most prominent of the band, and gladly entered into the meanest, who at best was but a "thief" and a "devil," in order by the one to dishonor, and by the other to get rid of, their blessed lowly Master!

The reader is referred to Matthew 10 and Luke 9 for the actual moment when the Lord conferred on Peter, and the twelve, the power here spoken of, and sent thorn on their joyful mission; from which we may also see them returning in Mark 6:30, and reporting to their Master "both what they had done, and what they had taught." How He appreciated, and entered into the toil, connected with their service, is seen in what follows, as He says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." Blessed Master! How well does He know how to equip, and send out His servants, and how to care for and refresh them, when they came back, whether returning elated with success, as in this instance, or depressed by difficulties, as has often been the ease with His less highly gifted, but not less deeply loved servants of later days.

Now let us go on Luke 8 for a moment. There is a remarkable scene here, and again Peter comes to the front (Luke 8:41-56). How beautifully the Lord responds to every call and every need! If you have any difficulty about the affection of Christ, about how He would respond to your call, and your need, these lovely gospel narratives ought to settle your difficulty. Look at this man Jairus, who had a dying daughter! He comes to Jesus about her. The Lord responds at once. Then the people throng Him, and press Him, and a woman who had spent all her living on physicians, and had only got worse instead of better, comes and touches His garment. Just like today. People spend their lives going about to all sorts of spiritual doctors, instead of simply coming to Christ, and of course get no better, for religion cannot save them. Religion can damn you very easily, if you are content with religiousness, without having ever come to a personal Saviour to be saved. This woman heard of Jesus, and she came to Him; and when she came, she touched; and when she had touched, she felt; and then she came forth and confessed Christ! She got all she wanted. She was healed immediately she touched the Saviour. So would you be, if you were to do as she did. Jesus then said "Who touched me?" And the Lord, looking down from glory, now says, Who is touching Me And will you not touch Him, dear friend, and get life from Him?

And now, poor dear blundering Peter puts in a word about the multitude, and says, "Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and gavest thou, Who touched me?" In all this throng, Lord, how can You ask who it is that has touched You? But Jesus said, "Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." That is always the way; if you only get near enough to touch the hem of His garment, virtue will go out from Him, and you will be healed, you will get all you need. The Lord will never shake you off; He will encourage you to come forth and confess Him. Only try Him — just come to Him, and touch Him. The virtue that comes out of Him always heals the soul that just simply touches Him in faith.

The woman comes out and confesses what she had done, and why she did it, and what the effect of it was. She had faith in His goodness, faith in His heart, faith in His person; and see what the Lord says, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith had made thee whole; go in peace." Peter learned a good lesson that day, that a throng might press his Lord and yet nobody really touch Him, whereas the faintest touch of faith secured the fullest blessing.

Next, in Jaime's house Peter gets another lesson, as be stands by and sees the Lord annul the power of death. He had seen Him heal his mother-in-law, he had seen how faith must be in exercise if blessing is to come, and now he learns that He is the

One who quells the power of death, that death cannot be in His presence. Jesus has power over death. He only met it to annul it, for He was the Lord of life. The thieves who were crucified with Him could not die till He had died; and when He died, He annulled the power of death, broke its bands, demolished the bars of the tomb, and came up out of it. Hence it is to a victorious triumphant Christ I call on you to come now, One who is alive for evermore. I have to do with a victorious Saviour, One who went into death that He might annul it, and did so by dying. He took my sins on Him as He went into it, and put them all away.

Peter was learning blessed lessons of the moral power and glory of his Master, as in Jairus' house he first saw how He dealt with infidel scorners, namely, "put them all out," and then heard Him say, "Maid, arise!" and bid her be fed.

This scene is a striking foreshadowing of what will yet be. A day is rapidly nearing when He who overcame death in the house of Jairus, will deal with it finally and forever. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This we see effected in Revelation 21:1-8. Happy will they be who are then the witnesses of the Saviour's final triumph. No scorner shall see it. All such are judged and "put out" in Revelation 20 by the judgment of the great white throne. Peter will witness the Lord's final victory over death; so too, through infinite grace, shall I. Will you, my reader, be a delighted witness, or a judged scorner in that day

(Mark 10:17-52)

There is a very striking contrast, in this scripture, between the question of the young man to the Lord, “What shall I do?” (Mark 10:17), and the question of the Lord, to the poor blind man at the close of the chapter, “What wilt thou that I should do?” (Mark 10:51). You do not read in this gospel, that the first questioner was a young man; but in the corresponding narrative, given to us in Matthew 19:20, we read that it was a young man, who came to Jesus with this deeply important question.

The young man was a ruler, and he was rich; but, ruler though he were, and rich also, the question of the possession of eternal life had not been settled satisfactorily in the history of his soul. Clearly, he was an earnest young man. It is a nice thing to see an earnest young man, and this one was distinctly so. He was running: “There came one running, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17). Clearly, he thought of eternal things. Evidently the question crossed his mind as to how eternal life was to be obtained. He had it not; he wished it. He wanted it, and desired, seriously, and earnestly, to know how he was to get eternal life.

Now, I trust there is a young man here — perhaps more than one — who really desires to know how to get eternal life; but, I do not doubt, that, till our eyes are thoroughly opened to see where we are, the same kind of question as this rich young man put to the Lord, would be put by us. He says, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Do you suppose that eternal life is to be inherited by doing? We have all thought so, at some time. But, some one says, does not the Lord answer him, and bid him do certain things? No doubt He does; but, it is just like this, the Lord, when this young man comes to Him, says, as it were, I will find out what you are prepared to do. And what comes out is this — he was not prepared to do that which would have given him eternal life, had it been obtained by doing. That is clear. In reality, he was tested; the Lord took him on the ground upon which he came to Him. And so will the Lord do now. I believe He takes us all at first upon the ground upon which we have accosted Him.

This ruler came to Jesus, apparently in immense earnestness, for he ran, and knelt to Him. Have you ever knelt to Jesus yet? to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God? I do not mean as a form, but with a sense in your heart that there was an immense need, which only He could meet. He kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” It was a most important question. No more important question could fall from his lips, and I am sure the Lord, took a deep interest in him, for we read, “Jesus beholding him, loved him” (Mark 10:21). Beautiful words, “He loved him!” I have no doubt there were moral features, and natural characteristics in this young man, that would make him a most desirable friend, and desirable companion. There was a fervor, an earnestness, a genuineness, and simplicity about him, that was charming, and, looking on his mere natural qualifications, the Lord “loved him.”

But, he came with this thought, you see, that he must “do” something. We have all thought similarly. When we think of possessing eternal life, the first thought always is, “What shall I do?” The Lord immediately replies, “Why callest thou Me good?” He does not answer his question straight; He puts another question to him, “Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” That ought to have smitten his conscience at once with the sense, if there be none good but one, I am not that one, and therefore I cannot do any “good thing.” Another gospel tells us that he said: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do?” (Matt. 19:16). Do you think you can do any good thing? I sometimes hear men talking about being better; nay, I have even heard them sometimes talk about “doing their best.” What folly!

The Lord Jesus Christ says here, “There is none good but one, that is, God.” And Scripture says, “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Here Christ asks, “Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” I think the Lord gave him the opportunity of saying, “But thou art God.” Had he really known, and clearly discerned the Person of Jesus, he would immediately have said, “Thou art God.” But, I take it, he saw no more in Christ than that He was a teacher of religion, hence when the claims of the Lord on him are presented to him, he does not rise to them. He could not, so he turned away sorrowfully.

First of all, the Lord says to him, since he came on the ground of doing, “Thou knowest the commandments; Do not commit adultery.” There are men in this hall tonight, who could truthfully say, I never did that. Perhaps there are some here who have committed it. Well, let even the adulterer learn this, that Christ can forgive him that sin, and the blood of Jesus can wash out that awful moral stain upon the soul. “Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and thy mother.” The Lord presents to him that table of the law which bears specially on his neighbor, and what he was to his neighbor. Then he says, “Master, all these have I observed from my youth.” That is, his outward conduct toward man had been perfect. But, my friend, let your conduct be never so perfect outwardly before man, that does not put you right before God. That does not fit your soul for God; and this young man felt he was not right before God.

“Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me” (Mark 10:21). He had a deep interest in him. I love to think that the Lord has a deep interest in every young man in this hall tonight. I may go further, and say, He loves you. Whether you love Him is another question. I do not think you have loved Him, until you have found out that He loves you. “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The heart of Jesus was deeply interested in this apparently anxious young man, this thoroughly anxious inquirer. “Then Jesus beholding him loved him.” Your conduct has been beautiful, He seems to say, but “one thing thou lackest.”

Matthew’s gospel tells us, that when the Lord had put the details of the law before him, he replied, “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” (Matt. 19:20). He himself, conscious of deficiency, propounds the question, “What lack I yet?” I will tell you what he lacked. He lacked the real knowledge of Christ, and, my friend, if you have not Christ, no matter how beautiful and moral your life may be, you lack everything. Let a man have and be what he may in this world, if he do not possess Christ, he lacks everything really worth having. The man who is not right about Christ, is wrong about everything else; be certain of that. The man who is right about Christ will be the man right about most things; but the man who is not right about Christ, is wrong about everything.

The Lord knew his condition, and expressed it in the words, “One thing thou lackest.” And what was lacking? Attachment to Himself. You have not attached yourself to Me, and there are certain things in the road which hinder you so doing. “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” No man likes to take up the, cross. First of all, do not you see what a difference it would make in this life? He was something in this life, because a rich man is always thought more of than a poor man; every one knows that. Far more is usually thought of the student that has heaps of money, than of the man who has only enough to pay his lodgings, and his class fees. We know that perfectly well. We know what men are, and riches are distinctly obstacles in the road of blessing.

But I pray you to carefully note that I do not think the Lord desires to teach you or me here, that eternal life is to be got by our giving up earthly things; that is not the way the gospel speaks. The gospel does not say we must give up in order to get. No, men are “turned to God from idols,” as Scripture says (1 Thess. 1:9); and turned to know Christ through grace, and possess Him; then, as they possess Him as their Saviour, what they are engaged in drops from them as autumn leaves. The reason why the Lord presented the truth as He did in this narrative, was because the young man came upon the ground of doing. He, so to speak, says, I must test you, whether you are prepared to do that which will at least put you on the way of getting eternal life. “Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor”; because, observe, he took the ground of loving his neighbor.

There are two tables of the law. The first is that summed up in, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (Luke 10:27). And the other table is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Had he loved his neighbor as himself? He had not committed adultery; he had not murdered; he had not stolen; he had not borne false witness; he had not defrauded; and he had honored his father and his mother. He was most estimable; but did he love his neighbor as himself? Certainly not. Why? Because he was wealthy. If he had loved his neighbor as himself, he could not have been wealthy.

Let us take an illustration! If I have got £1,000, and I love my neighbor as myself, I shall give him half of it. I cannot keep it to myself. I love him as myself. I must give him a share equal with myself. But, you ask, where would that land you presently? Just where the Lord would have this young man land. I have £1,000; I see my neighbor, who has not so much. If I love him as much as myself, then I go and hand him over £500. I have got £500 left, but again I see another neighbor without any, and I give him the £250; but there is another neighbor whom I see, who gets the £125, and so on. Why, you say, you will be stripped. That is the point. The Lord does not take a long time in reaching it. He says to the rich youth, If you mean to get eternal life on that ground, you go right away, and sell all you have, and give it to the poor; and thus illustrate the principle of the man who loves his neighbor as himself. Further, you will then have got rid of that which is a hindrance to your coming after Me.

Alas! he loved his money more than his soul. He loved his riches more than eternal life. He loved more, what he had got, than what he might have got — that is, Christ. The test was too great. What was he told? “Come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” What does the Lord mean by this? I am the rejected Saviour. Do not you shut your eyes; let no man delude, or deceive himself. It is a rejected Saviour that is preached today. Jesus is not popular. He could not be. The cross is not popular. It could not be. Oh no! “Take up the cross, and follow Me,” was a hard saying, although coupled with “and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” He had treasures on earth, and they entangled his heart. What do we then find? “He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:22). He said to himself, I cannot part with my money, my being something on earth, even though promised blessing in heaven, so he “went away grieved.” He was simply tested; and I believe we all get tested. I have been tested, and you will have to be.

But if there be one here tonight who wants eternal life, do I tell you, that you have to give up everything to get eternal life? I do nothing of the sort. That is not the gospel. The incident of this young man is a good illustration of the sad fact, that man is wrapped up in what makes much of himself, and further that he will not drop the thing that is seen, and temporal, for what is unseen though eternal. He will not give up the present things, seen and temporal, for what is unseen and eternal. The young man loved his money better than Christ; he loved what he had got better than what he might have got. He loved the bounties Providence had given him, and he clung to earth, to its wealth, to the things of time. He was as near salvation as you are tonight, but alas! he missed it. Do not you miss it. He was very near getting it; when coming to the feet of the Saviour, and hearing Him say, “Come, and follow Me.” What is His answer? No, I cannot do that. He goes away with a sad heart. He kept his money, and his lands, but he parted with Christ, and, as far as Scripture tells us, never met Him again. I gravely question whether you and I, if we be found in everlasting glory, with treasure there, by-and-by, will find that young man there.

Mark what the Lord says now: “Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished.” Then again he says: “Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?” (Mark 10:23-26). That is a grave question, “Who then can be saved?” If these earthly things come in as such insuperable difficulties, who can be saved? Let me reply. You may be saved if you will have salvation in God’s own way. If you are going on the tack of doing good, so as to give God a meritorious reason why He should bless you, then you will never get it. If you take the place which the man in the end of the chapter takes when he comes to Jesus in his need, you will have it.

You will have been struck with the contrast between the rich man who comes and asks, “What shall I do?” and the man in the end of the chapter, the poor blind beggar, to whom Jesus says, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” What a difference between the “What shall I do?” of the sinner to the Saviour, and the “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” of the Saviour to the sinner. Who can be saved? Any one who lets Jesus save him; any man who will let Jesus play the Saviour’s part — that is the man who will be saved. If you have not been saved, why not? Do not you want to be saved? Are you not desirous of being saved? The disciples may anxiously inquire, “Who then can be saved?” What is the answer? — Every one who takes his place as one incapable of doing that which will save himself, and who feels that he cannot earn eternal life for himself, and who will draw from the Saviour’s grace, and fullness, and goodness. You come to Jesus; you heed the lovely voice that calls you, and come to Him, and you will have treasure in heaven. Who can be saved? The man who hears the voice of Jesus, comes to Him, trusts Him, and gets all that His blood can purchase for him, and all that the Saviour’s heart can minister to Him. The man who will let Jesus bless him, that is the man who will be saved.

“Who then can be saved?” the disciples exclaimed in wonder. “And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.” You ask, What does that mean? It is not possible for you and me to be saved by our own efforts. Why is it impossible? Because we are sinners, and cannot save ourselves. How can you meet the claims of God in righteousness? You must be more than a man to do that. You may think your case is not a bad one. It is not the verdict of the sinner as to his own condition that settles it. You are no judge of your case. God has judged you, and me, to be sinners in our sins, lost, and undone. He has judged us to be what we are, incapable of extricating ourselves from the condition in which sin has landed us; and, the thing which is not possible with us, is possible with Him. “Who then can be saved?” said the disciples. Well, says Christ, “with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.” Whom then am I cast back upon? I am cast back upon God. How can you be saved? You must let God save you. You must bow down before God, and let Him save you. You say, How? It is very simple. It is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by the atoning work of the Saviour. There is no other way.

At this point Peter broke in, and said, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.” I think it was rather a pity that Peter said that, but the Lord’s reply amounts to this: “You have made a very good thing by it. It is a good thing for you that you did, Peter.” Indeed, it is quite true. If you have left all, and followed Jesus, you have made a good thing by it. You have not really lost anything. What have you lost? He says, “There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s” — (see how beautifully he personifies the gospel) — “but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). There is a string of blessings for you, with persecution, if you stand for Christ. I never knew a man, who stood for Christ, who did not get into trouble.

When I was a student myself I got plenty of roasting. There was no Christian Association, and there were no Christians among the men in the college, that I knew of, at least, at first. There were plenty of fellows on the world’s side, and they gave me a good deal of the petty persecution that godless men can furnish a young disciple of Christ with. I got my share of it, and it was a first-class thing for me. It kept me humble and clinging to Christ. Do not you be afraid of a little persecution. It will do you far more good than a little flattery. Depend upon it, this is true. The man who gets persecuted, and by grace is enabled to walk in lowliness, and to remain true to Christ shows that his conversion is genuine, and his faith real. Persecution will do him good.

A good many young men are like Jonathan, when he did not fully follow David. They do not stand for the Lord. They escape persecution, but they escape more than that. They escape the support of Christ; they escape the enjoyment of the love of Christ; and they escape the privilege of being a witness for Christ. Here we are to enjoy His salvation, “with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”

Well, now, have you left anything for Christ? I recollect perfectly well about three weeks after I was converted in London, that an old servant of God came to me, and said, “I hear you have been converted recently.” “Yes, sir,” I said. Then he told me to follow the Lord fully, and quoted these two verses (Mark 10:29-30). I did not see him again for many long years, but, twenty years afterward, I reminded him of the scriptures he had given me when I had been a Christian but three weeks. “And was what I quoted true?” he asked. “I daresay you have got some persecution for the Lord’s sake, but have you not proved His support?” I could only say how true were the words of my Lord, and to you let me commend them. I found the blessing of the Lord upon everything. I found myself outside the world, but in the family of God. I found myself to be a brother to all who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. I found I had ten thousand unknown brethren. As it is put here, “Ye shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren.” If you follow the Lord you will find yourself among the people of God, amongst those who will take a deep interest in you.

I must bear witness to the truth of the principle, which the Lord unfolds here, that, the man who leaves anything for Christ, and for the gospel’s sake, is compensated for it by the Lord. The Lord also sustains him in the enjoyment of His own heavenly blessings as he passes through this scene. If there be a young fellow here desirous to follow the Lord, be encouraged, my friend, to do so. You will never regret decision for Christ, nor discipleship in following Him.

What follows is very interesting. The Lord was going up to Jerusalem, to die; and He tells the disciples, as they were going up, what things were to happen. He went before them, and I doubt not the disciples were very much astonished at the Lord going out of their company, and going ahead. They followed and were afraid. Then He took them apart and showed them the things that should happen to Him. “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death.” If you and I are to live, Christ, the holy man, upon whom death had no claims, must go into death; and here He unfolds, in the most distinct way, that there is no way into the glory of God, except through His own death. There is no way to get eternal life but through His death. If we are to possess eternal life, it is not by any doing on our part. It is by His dying. The Jews, He says, “shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.” He was rejected of the Jews then, and He is a rejected Saviour still, for Christ is as much rejected in the nineteenth century as when He spoke these words. You stand for Christ, believe on Him, and be a man for Christ, and you will find this out. But what will He give you? His support. It is such joy to be on the Lord’s side. It is a blessed, and a wonderful thing, to be on the side of the rejected Saviour.

But in the moment when men rejected Him, He in love gave Himself for them. He died, and His work accomplished, He has gone to the right hand of God, where He is now glorified. There He sits; but He is the same Jesus tonight, as when He passed Bartimaeus that day, in the chapter before us — the same tender Saviour, though now in glory. Get you to the feet of that risen, ascended, victorious Saviour, and let Him bless you. If you want Him, you will find Him just as did the blind man. There he was, poor fellow, sitting by the wayside. He heard of Jesus, and so have you tonight. He was sitting there, hoping to get a little money, and, as he heard the crowd approach, I have no doubt, he said to himself, “I shall have a prosperous day, and get a good deal of money from this passing multitude.” But he was curious to know the meaning of that crowd. He was told, “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” No doubt he had heard of His miracles, and of how He had opened other men’s eyes, and he concluded He could open his.

In a minute the filling of his purse, and the getting of money are forgotten, and his voice rings over the crowd: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” That is what he says. The people said: “Hold your peace, be quiet; do not make a noise. Do you think He will stop for you?” But we read, “He cried the more, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” And that voice of need falls on the Saviour’s ear, and touches His heart, and Scripture says, “Jesus stood still.” He was on His way to Jerusalem to perform the

wonderful work of the cross, of which I have spoken, but the cry of need arrested Him. He is now in heaven, in glory, but, the voice of need touches Him now, just as the voice of misery and need touched Him then. “Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.”

And what do we then find? “And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.” The thing that hindered him, he cast away. Picture to yourself that blind man, sitting by the roadside, with the people all around him. When his cry is heard he felt, If I am going to get to Him through that crowd, I must cast off my garment — it will but hinder me; arid so he cast away his garment. He got rid of the thing that hindered him. Every man has hindrances. Do you likewise get rid of your hindrances, and come to Jesus. Read it again: “And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.” He was in earnest; he came to Jesus. He got through the crowd, until he stood in the presence of Jesus. “And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” That is the point: “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” “The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.” He wanted to see; he wanted his sight.

What do you want? Your sins forgiven; your soul saved; pardon, love, and acceptance with Him? You may have all. What Christ does, is to put down a blank check, with His name at the bottom, and you can fill it in for any amount you like. He says to you tonight, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” What is it you desire? That you may see the Saviour, the Son of God, who died but rose again? “Lord, that I might receive my sight,” said the blind man. “And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight.” His eyes were opened, and what was the first object he saw? Jesus! And that is what happens when the eyes of the sinner are opened. He sees Jesus.

The Lord says to him: “Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” He did what the rich young man did not do. Jesus said to the rich young man, “Come, take up the cross, and follow me.” And he went away sorrowful. To this man, with his eyes now open, what did Jesus say? “Go thy way.” Observe the Lord never makes a man follow Him. He would not make him a compulsory follower, if I may so speak. He who follows Him must love to follow, and that is just Bartimaeus’ case. What do I read? “He received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” He quickly made up his mind that henceforth the way of Jesus was to be his way. He followed Jesus. That was right. There is no compulsion. Did I tell you that you must follow Jesus, you would not do it. But you may follow Jesus. If you learn His love, you will follow Him. You will say from this night, Christ for me, and I am going to follow Christ, through evil report, and good. I am going to be for Jesus, and to follow Him in the way.

You have true discipleship here. The Lord help you to follow Him too. That is the right and wise thing to “do.”

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