

LAYING ASIDE PRIDE, A CRITICAL SPIRIT, AND SELFISHNESS

And give, so that the race may be run throughout the WHOLE WORLD!

Hebrews 12:1-2:

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God.



That great apostle Paul saw the men who raced, as the Greeks were famous for their Olympics. They would strap weights on their legs and feet, and then they would run and toil. But when the day came for the real race, they laid aside the weights. They were light footed, and they took off to win a race.

Jesus is soon coming! It is time to get light-footed. Lay aside the weights and run that good spiritual race, for never has there been a time in the history of the world that we need to run a good race for God more than



now. Keeping people morally right and spiritually right, with their eyes fixed on God, has become more and more of a concern. Most Christians spend more time watching TV than they do thinking about God. More children spend time on other things than they do on things of God. We go into

life and we lay God aside, and these things become weights that keep us from running this spiritual warfare — this spiritual battle — as we really ought.

Dr. Howard Rustoy, a great minister of the Gospel, was a chaplain during World War II. A great push was getting ready to go in Germany for Berlin. He said, *“The superiors drew the troops all in and said, we are now going in for the thrust of the war! We have had skirmish after skirmish, and battle after battle, and this is the final battle”*.

In the spiritual warfare, we are now entering into the final battle of the Holy Spirit dispensation, and it demands that we fight a good battle and run a good race so that we might be ready when the Lord comes.

Dr. Rustoy said that as they pulled the troops back, the first thing they did was to discard everything that was not regulation. If it was regulation, you could have it; if it was not, you had to get rid of it.

Along the warfare, some guys had picked up excess. The Italians had picked up accordions, and the Americans had picked up portable generators from which they were generating power for their little pup tents as they put them up. They took these generators out into the fields. One guy had a guitar. They threw the guitar out into the field along the accordions, because the orders went out: *“Lay aside every weight — everything that is not regulation, and get ready for the big push!”*



Oh, that speaks something to my heart. We ought to lay aside every weight that so easily beset us — every sin and every wrong that keeps us from being what God would have us be that is holding us down and keeping us from running light-footed that good race for the Lord in these days.

The next order that came was, *“You will also line up, and you will have everything that is regulation”*. Discard everything that is not — and put on everything that is.

Sometimes people throw away what they really need. For example, he said some guys had a knife, a fork, and a spoon, decided the spoon was all they needed, and threw the fork away; but afterward they had to go to the mess hall and get a fork. Some guys decided they didn't want a cap, so they threw it away along the way, but later they had to go get them a cap. On the other hand, some guys had shoes that were not regulation. They had to go get their boots.

Along the way they had made a lot of changes, and I am afraid the church of Jesus Christ has made a lot of changes from that New Testament church which was endued with power from on high. We are called to go into all the world to be witnesses. My, how that has changed!

Disobedience to God and His Laws.

Adam and Eve found out you can't break God's Law and get away with it. They were driven from the Garden.

Let's look at some others.



Pride

Lucifer himself — through pride — lost his position in the Kingdom of God. He was one of the archangels, but he said *“I will become as God. I will lift myself up above the Throne of God and be as God”*. He started to lift himself up, and he took one third of the angels of Heaven with him. The Bible tells us he was cast out into the earth.

Isaiah 14:12-15:

12 How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the pit.

King Nebuchadnezzar was blessed of Almighty God. He sat upon a throne, had riches, subjects, warriors — everything a man could wish for — because God’s anointing had rested upon him. God’s blessings had been with him, and God went with his armies and his kingdom. But one day he sat down upon the throne and robbed God of His glory, and through pride said, *“Look at all these things that my hands have created.”* So God let him have the heart of an animal, and removed him from his throne because of pride. He was like an animal of the field for seven long years, until he repented. His heart was not right because of pride.



Daniel 4:29-33:

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and

seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.

³³ The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Pride will keep you from being what you ought to be in the Kingdom of God.

Pride will keep you from being what you ought to be in the Kingdom of God. There are no big shots or little shots in the Kingdom of God. There are no big Christians or little Christians in the Kingdom of God. All there is in the Kingdom of God are people who have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb.

Temptation

As we walk along life's pathway, sometimes we are tempted to not be what we ought to be. Ask King David about temptation. He had a great kingdom, and God's blessing was with him. But he was tempted when he looked over and saw another man's wife naked, taking a sunbath, and the temptation brought him down. Heartache, sorrow, and trouble followed.



Ask Samson about temptation. He was anointed of God until he laid his head in the lap of Delilah — or the world — who cut off his hair because he broke his vows. *“Cleanse yourself of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Come ye out from among them and be ye a separate people, saith the Lord.”*

2 Corinthians 7:1: Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 6:17: Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

So, pride and temptation are weights that will so easily beset us.

Criticism

You criticize the music that it is too fast or too loud when you'd better be listening to the message. This preacher does not have a pulpit in front of him, and you consider me undignified when I'm standing out there in the middle of the aisle without my notes. If I don't know my message well enough that I don't have to read it word for word, how in the world can you retain it when you haven't studied it all week. Come on now.



I just decided I would like the pulpit out of the way. I would like to see you people, not peek over a great big pulpit. The Bible doesn't say anything about a pulpit, but there are some people in our church who would like to have a great big old pulpit up here.

Two Birds fly – one is a buzzard, circling around, breaking down for something that is rotten and stinks. If he looks long enough, he will find it. A little hummingbird flies over the same area, singing a song, and he didn't even see anything that was rotten. He wasn't looking for it. He was looking for the flowers, birds and trees, and everything, and he was happy.



What kind of Christian are you? I didn't say a buzzard Christian or a hummingbird Christian, but what kind are you?



Miriam criticized Moses and was smitten. The disciples were walking along one day, casting out devils, and they saw others and said, "*They are not of us*". And Jesus said, "*Leave them alone. Don't criticize them*".

Luke 9:49-50:

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Selfishness and Hypocrisy

Let's consider Ananias and Sapphira. **Acts 4** gives us the following account of the early Church:

Acts 4:32-35:

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

People were selling their possessions and bringing the money to the Apostles for them to distribute as needed. Ananias and Sapphira, husband and wife, were among those who sold a possession. However, they got a little bit selfish, kept back part of the money, and presented it to the apostles under the pretense that they were giving it all. Lets see what happened:

Acts 5:1-11:

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the Apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost [died]: and great fear came on on them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.



7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?

behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

¹⁰ Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

¹¹ And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

I wonder if this doesn't say something to us in our challenge now that the end of this Holy Spirit dispensation is at hand. If there ever were a time when God's people who are called by His Name ought to pay their tithes, and give alms and offerings above the tithe to support God's people and God's work where the Gospel is being preached, it is today. You are going to fool around, and the first thing you know, the Lord is going to come, or the day will come when the doors are not open for work while it is day, and the night cometh when no man can work.

John 9:4: I must work the works of Him Who sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

I can stand here today and preach the Gospel to the United States and Canada on 367 stations and around the world — to all the islands of the sea, around the world to Africa, South America, Asia, and other places, because now the door is open. But a month or a year from now — even if we had all the money in the world — we might not be able to go into these areas. There are some of you, even in this church, and some of you who have watched us for the last 20 years on TV, that have never once made an investment to help get the Gospel out. I say to you that you are selfish if you are not wanting to help take the Gospel out to others. Let's get going. Let's get busy.



Ananias and Sapphira were too selfish to obey God, and they fell dead, even in the church.

Without Christ and the Holy Spirit, we cannot win this race of life and this game of life.

Peter tried it. He went around with Jesus, following Him wherever He went. He was going to be a fisher of men. But then, Peter denied the Lord, and it took some repentance and an Upper Room encounter with the Holy Spirit to be en-



with power from on high to keep him stable and what he ought to be. And you and I cannot win this race in life without the power of the Holy Spirit in and upon us.

Acts 1:8: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5:16: This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:24-26:

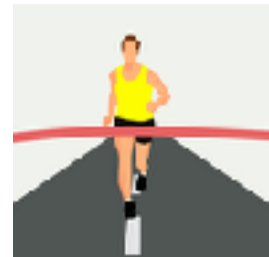
²⁴ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

²⁶ Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

This is what stripping ourselves is all about. It's laying aside those things that so easily beset us, and rededicating ourselves unto the Lord. When we allow Him to fill us with His Spirit, He can use us for His Honor and Glory.

Run that good race so that when He comes, we will be ready!



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