

^{is Expected of A layman?}
HOW MUCH DO I HAVE TO DO

Matthew 5:41

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

No doubt you have heard in your conversation, people talk about the "second mile religion." Has it ever occurred to you how easy it seems that people become Christians and then how difficult it is for them to live in this world as a Christian. It is obvious that thousands of people have become Christians. And perhaps in the strict sense, Christians - they have had a conversion but their great trouble is that they are not living like Christians. There is some great need today that ought to take place, that should be a big difference in becoming a Christian and making it very easy for people to be born of the spirit because we have to live this life in a body of flesh. In fact, we live in a (physical body) and it is really not easy for us to do what Jesus suggests here in our text.

We are thinking tonight in (terms of how much do I have to do - and in this special service we are to ordain some deacons at the close of it. And why do leaders exist in the church. The very name indicates the roll of a servant. During the centuries, the fundamental function has been that of a servant, a helper, one to help in the work of the church. The churches have deacons, elders, or stewards, or men who have been selected to assist and to help in carrying on God's work.

You remember in the New Testament, Phillip was a deacon and he spent a good deal of his time out working and witnessing.

Now Jesus never made any apologies for the demands which he made upon his disciples. It costs something to be a Christian. It costs something to be a

leader in the church. And when you think about it, it is a real tough responsibility.

When we think about that expression, the second mile, has been used in many ways. Not only to apply to Christians - but people apply that to salesmanship and they apply it to positive living. But did you know that most people today do not know what Jesus was saying.

We have here presented to us a (foundation principle) for abundant living and service. Most of us look out for our duty. Others of us will do just what the law requires. If we would truly understand this statement, we would discover that the Pharisees were very strict in observing the law. At this point, Jesus tells them that they should have gone farther.

I remember reading about a Sunday School teacher assigning this verse of Scripture for memory work, to a group of pupils. On the following Sunday morning, he asked for a volunteer, to give the verse. And one boy answered that he knew it. Here is the way he quoted it -- "And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him one mile, go with him by train."

And that is about the understanding that some of us have with this text.

it When we go back to the (background) and setting of this verse, it is very important. Wherever the (Roman Empire) had conquered a new town, a (Roman yoke) was put in the marketplace or in the principle gate of the city. Sometimes, everybody passed under it. Sometimes just the leaders passed under signifying and promising that they would give obedience and tribute to the Roman Empire.

Now this passage refers especially way back to the (Persian system) of mounted couriers. The latter development was not a postal service but it was

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a forced military transportation for luggage. These mounted messengers were stationed by the king of Persia at fixed localities with horses ready for use to send royal messengers one to another. So if a man is passing such a post, or station, an official may rush out and compel him to go back to another station to do an errand for the king. This was called (impressment) into the service. From the military stand point, it was not merely the offer, but it was a (forced) service.

Now when a Roman soldier wanted you to carry his pack for a mile, or run an errand for a mile - it was a must. Of course, it was a humiliating experience. And you might expect in an emergency no one would expect you to go farther than a mile.

The Jews of Palestine were a conscripted people - the Roman government had overpowered and enslaved them. The Roman legislature had imposed upon them many responsibilities - and some of them were easy and pleasant. But this one comes to mind that the proud Jewish people who were suppressed and controlled by the foreign power made it difficult.

The law said that if a Roman soldier was carrying his pack and walking down a country road and came across a Jewish boy working in the field, or even a man for that matter - he had the right to compel that boy or that man to carry his pack for a mile.

Hopefully at the end of that mile, he could find someone else to carry it another mile.

Now you can imagine how Jesus upset his listeners. It was just like dropping a bomb shell in the midst of these people. They wondered if he was

to approve the Roman system and that he was saying, you must obey them. And when Jesus said, you cheerfully go on with them a second mile - not only were they to go the law of the land. But Jesus was saying you just go a little farther.

Of course, we miss the angle of the message of this verse, if we think only of the material things, or the military angle. For he was speaking of the individual in his business or his profession and tried to apply it to all of life.

Jesus is here giving the (Sermon on the Mount.) He is telling people about happiness and how to live the abundant life.

I can imagine that many a man and boy were barely able to make that one mile. And only as a sacrifice of their own dignity which was offending. Perhaps there was (a man working in a field.) He is trying to make a bed now. He is trying to harvest his crop before the rain comes. He is probably trying to get the crop in today. Sundown arrives - and suppose he is fighting a dead-line like this. And he wanted to get to the market-place before 5 o'clock. Before things closed. And just a few minutes before 5, here arrives a Roman soldier and demands that he stop what he is doing and carry his pack for a mile. I suppose at the end of such a journey, more than one Hebrew boy or man flung his pack at the feet of the Roman soldier and said - if I ever meet you at night in the dark alley, I will get even with you for this.

There are many people who take the demands of life just like that and say I'll do what I have to do whether I like it or not but I am not going to like a thing about it. And don't you count on me going any farther than thus far.

On the other hand, can you imagine when one day a Roman soldier comes along

and a boy is in the field tending his sheep and the soldier demands that he carries the pack for a mile. The boy smiles, and he gladly carries it, and he walks along and he asks the soldier questions. Tell me about the wonderful places you've been. You've been across the seas. How do you like our people. After the mile the soldier notices that the boy is still happy, he is still walking along. And as they come into the 3rd mile, the soldier sees the boy is still enjoying himself, and he is dumb-founded. He has never witnessed such joy.

But somewhere along that road that soldier gets feeling guilty. Son, I hate to tell you this but you have gone a lots farther than that first mile. You've gone a second mile. And the boy said, well, I've really enjoyed the walk. I have just enjoyed knowing you. And I belong to a new religion called "The Way" - I am a follower of Jesus. He taught his followers that they were supposed to do things like this. And I found out a long time ago, if you do what Jesus says, it is actually a pleasant thing. And when you come by again sometimes, I'd like to know about it and know you better. I can imagine the Roman soldier going off mumbling under his breath. And I wonder if somewhere down the line that very soldier might have looked at the cross. And of course that boy did not know whether he would see that man again.

Now there are several (observations) that we might make if we take this literally. Now there are some of us who have never yet begun to be Christians. And Jesus is giving us the general law of the kingdom of Heaven, in this sermon.

I. THIS IS THE UNIVERSAL LAW OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

The first thing that I would like for us to understand is that Jesus is

giving us the universal law of Christian conduct here. He was speaking of men who were living under a stern yoke in compliance with the Roman government. And this law of Christian conduct was to be for private Christian guidance.

If a man compelled or commanded you to go one mile, you as a Christian - you are obligated to go on a second mile.

You know I think every man is obligated to go the first mile. In a very real sense, all of life can ^{be} taken in this light. There are two decisions - we can go the first mile and we can go the second mile. People go the first mile when things are easy. But they do not want to go the second mile because it may be hard. And so like the old Persian word which means to conscript, to carry the royal mail for the King's messages.

Every man has duties which are undertaken. Not of choice but of necessity. And he ought to perform them readily and cheerfully. Now there is no question of release here - it is a part of life. It is to be healthy for a man to accept the things as they are.

Now people who are always trying to wiggle out of the basic responsibilities of life need to remember that this is the pattern of life. This is the basic requirement of you. This is a demand that you go this first mile.

Life certainly does have privileges. And some of these privileges have built in blessings and benefits, that come to us as human beings.

God charges us with some responsibility. A lots of people have never come to understand that life doesn't really owe them all that much.

But I owe my Lord, my church, my society, my city. I owe life some things.

This is a very simple and basic principle of life. People need to be reminded of it - especially in the life style of today.

There are people today who say you can make more by not working than by working.

You get something for nothing if you work it right.

The world doesn't really owe you near as much as you owe the world. As you owe God, or your church.

Now the Bible does not say that the leaders in the church have to go to church on Wednesday nights or Sunday nights, or even Sunday morning. But there comes a time when you can chose what you can do in going the second mile or not. The Bible very clearly says you've got to go that first mile. "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together." How do you get around that?

There are somethings that are required in being (parents) Just like there are some things that are required in being good church members. Just as there are certain things in being a good neighbor.

Just as there are certain things in obeying the law and paying your bills.

Far too many do not understand. But the first mile has the privilege of being extracted from us. Well, people say - well Preacher I just don't like that. I don't like the fact that there are some laws and rules imposed upon me in society. Some things that the Lord even lays down for your life. Well, the Jews did not like it either. But Jesus said to obey the law of the land. And

to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God that which is God's. And this is the whole matter of life. Instead of being resentful and hateful, and a judge, and argue - we just can't go through life and pull all the juice out of all things and getting all the goodies and all the benefits and have them to fall upon us without some restrictions and without going down that first mile.

Now what I am saying to you is that this is part of the universal conduct of a Christian. To go this first mile.

John Wesley at one time was quite bias concerning denominational business. Then he had a dream in which it seems he was transported to the gates of Hell. Ceased by the opportunity, Wesley inquired -- are there any Presbyterians here? Yes, was the reply. Any Roman Catholics - yes. Any Congregationals - yes. He hesitated a moment and then he said - not any Methodists, I hope. To his dismay, the answer was the same.

Suddenly his (dream changed) and he stood at the gate of Heaven. Are there any Presbyterians here - no? And so on down through the list he went - until he came to the question that most interested him. Are there any Methodists here - he was shocked to receive the same stern reply - no.

Well then, he asked in surprise - please tell me who is in Heaven. (Christians was the jubilant answer.)

I wonder if your only concern is for the one little group that you belong too. Do you love all the brethren. This was a strange experience for Wesley. When he came to discover that man first of all must make this first mile. Regardless of what denomination he was.

When we, like Wesley, (slay ego) then we will discover that whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall save it. That is exactly what Jesus said. Christ says to you as C. S. Lewis expresses it, give me all. I don't want so much of your money and so much of your work. I have not come to torment your natural self but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth or crown it, or stop it - but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self. All the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones that you think wicked. The whole outfit - and I will give you a new self.

You remember that Paul said - our old self was crucified with him. That is with Christ. To do away with our sinful body. Now this helps us not to be self-centered but to be God-centered. And we slay ego.

I read about a girl in college who stayed for 9 years and made straight A's. She never got a degree because she took all electives - that is, she did not want to take the requirements. And you know, if we are not careful in our church today, there are lots of people who just want to take the electives. They want just what they want out of the church but they don't want to take the requirements of Jesus here and go the second mile and fulfill this.

For example, young people ^{ing} surrender- to preach today - they all want to be Billy Graham evangelists. They want to go and hold city-wide and county-wide meetings but none of them really want to go down the first mile into the one room church and preach. Or go out to the country to preach and work among those who need help. Now you really can't go that second mile until you have fulfilled the first. The first mile is the hard one. It is what is demanded, and required of us. I don't believe that God is going to bless you with his promised blessing

until you fulfill the requirements there and go the second mile.

Now I think today, if you are going to find happiness, you ought to give to the wonderful cause and support your church. Now there are sometimes it is easier for people to give money to the Billy Graham Crusades and other movements that come along, ^{T.V. appeals -} and other organizations. And we don't want these other organizations to go under financially. But you must be concerned that we as a church stay afloat. That is your first responsibility. There is some people who like to give all their time and work to more exciting phases of the ministry. Now that is very good. There are people who like to get out on the outside of their church into this, that, or the other and it involves them in some sort of religious activity that seems to be glamorous and at the same time they sacrifice their attendance and their responsibility to their church.

Dr. Criswell said recently, the first time in the history of the First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, that they were facing some serious financial trouble. Because many of their people were giving to all the glamorous things instead of giving their time and tithes through the local church. It is so easy for us to let this attitude of society slip into the church. And let the glamorous things in this second mile effort sort of substitute for the responsibilities of the first mile.

We need to accept the responsibility that our tithes, our work, and our attendance is in the church for which Jesus died. Every leader needs to keep his priorities in place.

If we don't, the benefits then won't come to us in the first, second, or the third mile.

For example, if I could illustrate something that we could all understand --

singing in the church. There are people who quite often come along and want to be a (star). Without the blessing of going down the first mile or the second mile. They come along and they want to be a soloist and they want to do something glamorous. They don't want to come to choir practice and work at that time that it takes and is required. Now I'm telling you that I think that Jesus requires that you go that first and that second mile will come out, and you will be of blessing to him.

Now I have indicated that this is universal conduct for a Christian - go that first mile.

II - Second, I have tried to indicate to you that this is the way to find happiness and the greatest blessings in life - is to go on the second mile as Jesus said in Matt. 16:25 - whosoever shall save his life, shall lose his life. Now this means that the man who is self-possessive in his attitude - and says this is my life and I'll get mine first. Look after No. 1. Now that man is going to end up losing the very thing that he is trying to save. But whosoever says I am going to lose my life for Christ's sake - he'll find it at the end of life. He'll find it. And that's the way that leaders in the church discover the greatest joy.

You remember that Jesus told Peter - you forgive not 7 times but 70 times. Jesus was not limiting to 490 the times that you are going to forgive. He was saying indefinitely - always. You just keep on forgiving. The man is not supposed to keep score of what he has been offended of.

The Pharisees had it all figured out. Don't commit adultery openly before the eyes of people - you are safe. And you can think anything you want. Now Jesus said to be sure that there is a restriction on committing this sin in the public. And Jesus talked about committing it in your heart. He talked about

the Sabbath still being a holy day. And the law demanded 10% of their income. But how much more gladly will a man give above the law. The blessings really lie in the second mile. Not that you do it grudgingly - ours is a second mile religion - not a disgruntled keeper of the law. Well, I'll give so and so - I don't want too and I am a church member. You know, you are going to be miserable that way.

Now I think a lot of deacons and leaders in the church - now they can come when he doesn't have to come to a meeting of the church. He may be tired, he may be just as tired as everyone else. But when he comes, and will go the second mile - things will happen. When a leader comes by and says Preacher, don't you worry about this little problem - you just forget it. We'll take care of that. Now that is second mile religion.

It is that Sunday School Teacher who doesn't have to be in her class early or Sunday morning. It may be that Sunday School Teacher who does not have to worry about that individual who is not present in her class, has been absent - sick, or indifferent. Now she really doesn't have to do this but here is a teacher who gets this upon her heart and she puts a little extra dimension into it. And she goes out and she says we really do love you and we want you. That is second mile.

I think this is a committee member in the church when the decision is made and he finds himself in the minority. Now its the way he responds in that code - though I may disagree, I will not be disagreeable and whether I have my own way or not, though it is my right to oppose you in the church - I am not going to call all of my friends and gossip in the homes. I will forego that right. I will contribute that part to the solution. Rather than being a problem. To me that is second mile religion.

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There was the story told of a famous surgeon. A young doctor came and watched him do his surgery and greatly benefited there from. One day some of the young men began to notice at the end of every operation instead of simply tying two knots the doctor had a habit of tying three knots. At the end of one of his operations a young student said to him, I want to ask you a question. Does not the books teach that one knot tied in the thread after the operation if tied correctly is all that is necessary. For he noticed that he followed the book to the letter - you made the incision like the book said. You brought the veins together like the book said. The operation, and then you tied two knots - is that right. Yes, answered the doctor, that's what the book says. I don't understand the student said - will you please explain. And he said my secret is calling my sleeping knot. "That is tonight, when I go to bed, and I run through this operation again, the question will come - did I tie the knot. And then I will remember that I tied three. And it cannot come loose.

And I can always go to sleep.

You see, that's the great principle of life - he found a lot of satisfaction in doing more than he was required to do. And if our attitude of life is so self-centered that we do only what life demands, it will kill us. And we will never experience the blessings of that second mile. But if we try to substitute this joy, it will bring something into our lives.

III. THIS TEXT WILL HELP BRING OUT THE BEST IN OTHERS

I think when you go the second mile you will be able to be a blessing to other people. Carold Morgan told of an experience of finding the Gospel of John in the back seat of a cab in New York City. He said someone left this Gospel of

John in your back seat. Speaking to the cab driver. The driver said, I put it there. I've been driving a cab for 20 years - this is how I witness. I put the Gospel of John - I tuck it inside always. He said you know, one day a trial lawyer was riding along and he reacted negatively to the Gospel of John. He said, I'll have nothing to do with it. I have always managed for myself. There will come a time, said the cab driver, when you won't be able to take care of yourself. He said, well, when will that be. When you stand before the judgement bar of God without Jesus as your Saviour. The cab driver said, it is not my job to make Christians out of my passengers. It is my job to witness and to sow the seed. Now he was going the second mile. He was being beneficial to others. He had given out over 25,000 copies of the Gospel of John and 45,000 tracts.

Another good way of illustrating this is the story of Dr. Truet who told of a farmer who won his neighbor to Christ and to church. The farmer had been long concerned during the summer meeting of his church. He sought to win him to a public profession of faith. He invited him to attend the services at the church but the man offered many excuses. He said, at last, that he was behind with is plowing and he must make a crop. The next morning the Christian came to take his neighbor's place at the plow, so that he might attend the revival services. God's spirit worked a miracle of grace and the farmer professed his faith in Christ. He became a useful member of the church.

We shall not win our neighbors without a conviction of their need for the master. And faith in the ability of Christ to redeem. We shall not witness until we have compassion. We will need more than a pass word. It takes willingness to work in co-operation with the spirit. And courage to continue to labor on until Heaven's victory is won. This man went the second mile and brought out the very best in his neighbor.

IV. THE SECOND MILE WILL LIGHTEN OUR BURDEN

How much do I have to do. This is the grand principle and if practiced could transform a home. It will make all the burdens of life lighter. If you would practice this in the church -- what a lift it would give to everyone.

As someone has said, don't give your guests milk after you have skimmed the cream off.

I might illustrate this truth - a husband is hurrying off to work and the button on his coat is off. And he says, wife, will you sew it on. Of course, she stops and says, your buttons get off at the most in- opportune times. Why didn't you tell me about it last night and she fusses some more and she finally finishes the button and throws the coat on the table. There it is - next time, let me know when it gets loose. And then she goes on back to her dishes.

Now it is the wife's turn at the end of the week. She said I had extra expense, I need \$5.00. And the husband replies what in the world do you do with so much money anyhow.

Now the second mile religion would do the thing like this -- here is the husband - he comes in and he says honey, I've got a button off. Oh yes, I'll fix it in just a minute. She fixes and finishes the button. She holds the coat for him to put it on. And he goes on his way with a song in his heart.

Now it is the wife's turn and she says, honey, you know I've had some extra expense. I am about \$5.00 short this week. And the husband says, well, you know I don't see how you ever stretch money as far as you do - here is \$10 instead of \$5. Now that is the second mile that we are talking about. How much do I have to do.

V. THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT GOD WENT THE SECOND MILE

Now every man should be ready to do much - he ought to be ready to suffer much. The Christian's work must never be done in a slavish spirit. It must be done in a cheerful spirit. If we render our Christian service in reluctance with a complaining spirit as though we unwelcome the task - then we are not doing it like God would have it done. Let me point out two or three things here.

First, think about Jesus Himself. John 3:16. Did you ever think about that verse of Scripture. Jesus never gave us a commandment that he himself did not live. Of course the greatest second mile ever presented to the world was Jesus himself. And in spite of all of this, men still turn away from God. With God in your life it will be a joy to travel that second mile just as Jesus traveled it.

Second, the Good Samaritan. Now this man was not pressed into going the second mile - nor was he pressed into going the first mile. But it was simply something that he had in his heart. Think about what it cost that man. He had to use his own animal, use his own money, and he had to get medical help. And he had to get a room for this man who had been wounded for this man to lodge in. And he had to get food for him. Now this was going the second mile.

Third, David wasn't compelled to go the first mile with Saul. Because Saul sought to take his life.

Zacchaeus was not forced to pay back any of the money that he had collected in the wrong manner. When God came into his life - when he got his life in line with Jesus. Zacchaeus was ready to go not just the first mile of paying his debts back, but he was going to double up because I have caused some of these

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people an inconvenience and I have done them wrong morally.

Fifth, Simon take the case of this man in Matt. 27:22 and it is also given in Mark 15:21 - such service as this man rendered was not popular. They found a man named Simon and they compelled him to bear his cross - the cross of Jesus. Now this was forced service. He was pressed by the Roman soldiers. Who were escorting our Lord - not merely to accompany them but he was to carry a load.

The thought is doubtless that being compelled to carry baggage.

Now this demand was inconvenient for Simon.

Perhaps Simon had heard of Jesus and he had heard Jesus talk about if a man compel you to go one mile - go with him two miles. And Simon gladly said, I will gladly carry the cross - I'll travel the second mile. How much do I have to do? Well, the whole problem boils down to how much do you really want to do. How much are you going to willingly undertake.