

This is familiar, but it is dangerous! We are so busy wanting others to follow Christ faithfully that we do not settle down to the business of following him ourselves.

Some (horses) have to have blinders on their bridles to keep them from distraction...so they can't see off to the side and will keep their eyes on the work ahead. Maybe we Christians need some such device, if we are to have a consistent and undisturbed loyalty to Christ.

Seeing what others lack in the way of help hinders our growth.

Another draw back is seeing their weaknesses and failures. We then become satisfied with our own religious progress,--complacent.

The (poor achievements) of others become our standard instead of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...Christ is our example, not some indifferent church member!

Must be willing to pay the price of growth, Gal. 2:20

"Not for ease or worldly pleasure,  
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;  
Gladly will I toil and suffer,  
Only let me live for thee,  
My life, my love I give to thee,  
Thou Lamb of God who died for me.

Men want a cheap Christ, but the price will not come down...if you cannot say, "I am crucified with Christ," you cannot say, "Jesus is mine."

An agonizing Christ and an ease-seeking disciple have little fellowship.

#### V. No Excuse Will release you of this Responsibility

Peter will have no excuse because of John.

Your contention that there are hypocrites in the church does not release you. You will see a lot of professing Christians whose lives are imperfect.

You do not follow Christ because some one who professes religion has let you down. He has given a poor demonstration of Christianity.

Jesus would say to you, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me!"

Some people never tire of talking about hypocrites in the church...you mention religion or the church to some and they

## INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

John 21:22

Intro: A friend once asked Daniel Webster, "Mr. Webster, will you tell us the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?" The great statesman thought a moment, and then said, "The most important thought that ever occupied my mind was that of my individual responsibility to God."

This is the truth our Lord is trying to get across to Simon Peter. He has an individual responsibility to God entirely apart from his fellows.

### I. Individual Call

First note Jesus here with the seven on the sea shore and he now tells Peter of his coming death, that he would be called upon to suffer a martyr's death, that he would die for the faith.

As the two talked John, "the beloved disciple", came toward them. When Peter saw his fellow disciple approaching he said to Jesus: "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

Jesus said, "Mind your own business, Peter. What is in store for John is no affair of yours. Only see to it that my plan for you is carried out.

The master turns Peter's attention to his own individual call to follow Jesus.

The same is true today. The group of students who sought refuge from the rain under a haystack and there in conference started a Christian movement that affected the world.

Call to put his mind on his own private duty.

### II. The Other Fellow Will Not Do Your Work

Peter needed this rebuke and so do many of us. One of the most important lessons which you and I have to learn is to get our eyes off other people.

Need to tend to our own knitting,--doing and being what God meant for us to do and to be.

Tendency to watch the other fellow, and contrast our situation with his. This is a common temptation.

It is a great day in a person's life when he makes up his mind to be himself and to do his own work, --to fill his own special niche and to follow God's unique plan for him.

Emerson - "There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself, for better for worse, as his portion."

God had a work for Peter to do -- a work for John to do. Peter could serve God best by simply being Peter...He would have failed doing John's work.

God's will or plan is never the same for any two of us. He had a blueprint for Peter's life.

### III. You have an individual gift

1 Cor. 12:4-6 - also in Ephesians we are reminded that gifts unto men are varied. Some are special messengers, some prophets, teachers and Preachers. (Eph 4:11-12)

Martin Luther said of Philip Melancton "I was born to be a rough controversialist. I clear the ground, pull up the weeds, fill up ditches, and smooth the roads. But to build, to plan, to sow, to water, to adorn the country, belongs by the grace of God to Melancton."

Luther was willing to be Luther in all the glory and power of his individuality.

God knows what he is doing when he hands to each of us a particular set of abilities.

We should thank God for the gift he has given us. Can one know how dreadful it would be to be in total darkness and not thank him for light and eye-sight?

Can one know of maimed bodies and not be thankful that he can hear and have feet to walk and a tongue to speak?

Can one know of the wasting of disease and fail to be thankful for medicines that restore?

Christ has given us gifts, are we thankful.

Think of Athens, full of intellectual knowledge, yet a writer laughed at them because they had more gods on her streets than men.

Think of Pompeii, excavators found marble steps before a heathen altar...steps worn down so hard as to make them almost a smooth ramp...behind that altar, the ashes of Vesuvius had buried 30 people who fled there for refuge, but there was nothing to breathe, but flame and hot ashes and no cover but steaming lava...blind to their gifts.

Think of Bersian mothers trying to get right with God by laying the babies that nursed their breasts in the arms of red-hot Moloch.

Think of Mothers in India listening to the cries of their babies drowned by the greedy gulping of the crocodiles hoping to get the smiles from God...nothing man could do, or can do, will make things right between him and God.

A Bankrupt can not pay his debts...a sick man can not care for himself...an eagle with broken wings cannot soar to the clouds.

"Could my tears forever flow,  
Could my zeal no languor know,  
These for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and thou alone.

God Hates sin, but he loves the sinner. Give thanks to Him for the gifts bestowed.

### IV. Individual Growth

Habit of watching others slows our own spiritual growth "not what shall this man do? But what about yourself!"

We work hard in the church and see others who are not working hard and it disturbs us.

They seem worldly, indifferent and free...they assume little responsibility for the Christian cause...as we watch them we begin to feel sorry for ourselves.

We think our lot is hard and we bear more than our portion of the burden.

We grow tired of the responsibility and want to "throw in the sponge."

Why should I be asked to carry a heavy load, while others go scot free?

go like a rat to drag out some moth-eaten story about a bad deacon and splash the mud around.

Now the people who attend church are confessing that they do need what Christ has to offer.

The Church is not a display room for model Christians. It is a spiritual hospital for people who know they are sick and are hopeless without God.

I do not stand in this pulpit because I think that I am better or smarter than someone else. I do not stand here because I have "arrived" spiritually. I am here because I think that this is where God wants me to be and because I have some good news about Him.

#### VI. Peter Must Answer For Himself

Jesus was quick to point out that He had an individual responsibility.

Dear friend in the church---you will answer.

Dear friend outside the church---you will answer, what you say about certain church members may be true, but it will not weather the judgment.

No man will strut through the gate of heaven swinging a gold headed cane.

No man will go in on his Masonic lodge.

No man will go in on his political achievements.

No man will go in on his stars and bars and silver medals.

No man will go in on his college diplomas.

No man will go in on his record as a soldier or statesman.

No man will go in on his ordination paper.

No man will go in on his pile of money.

No man will go in on his scientific discoveries.

No man will go in on the life of an indifferent hypocrite in the church.

We will all go in, if we go at all, just as we are, without one plea.

There you must speak for yourself and only yourself.

If some people have missed what Christ came to give, why should you miss it?

Will you offer your life to the cause of Christ?

If some of us have hurt the name of Christ, will you help to redeem it?

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20. Nov. - July 9, 58 Prayer Meeting -  
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If the church is not all you think it ought to be, will you come in and help to make it better?

Some 700 years before Christ the Spirit moved upon that prince of the prophets, Isaiah, and he wrote, Isaiah 42:1-4.

Great comfort and inspiration come to my heart as I read this passage. A war weary world is still unbelieving. Black clouds of discouragement can be seen any day, billows rise high on a stormy sea, but like a shaft of a beacon light comes this assurance, "He shall not fail."

The prophet did not have in mind the mighty Pharaohs of old, nor the Caesars soon to appear in history, who in vanity strutted across a brief stage.

He was speaking of the Christ who was our leader, and he said "He shall not fail, not be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth" no just in our blessed land, but in the earth, and the time shall come of final judgment.

It is ours to be faithful now, for in his own good time he will come to reward his own and complete his great plan. "Even so, Come Lord Jesus."

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