

Nov - 16, 80 A.M.
(Import vs. Anne)

"THE PRICE OF POWER"

Matt. 16:21-28

INTRODUCTION:

Every man needs power.

Every man covets power.

Every man has the Master's promise of power.

But every man does not possess the promised power.

Many of us today are lacking in that power.

Many of us will look back at the close of life with a keen disappointment and bitter defeat.

The reason is not hard to find - we were not willing to pay the price.

(Everything costs)-- there is a law of exchange that rules every sphere of life. "To get, you must give." It rules the (business world)-- if I want a house, a hat, or a ham - I must agree to give a sum or price.

It rules in the (intellectual) world. A young person must give time, some real hard work, if he wants a disciplined mind.

It holds true in the (Spirit realm), we are governed by this same law. Too have power in our lives over sin and selfishness, passion, appetite, tongue, temper, self-seeking ambition; to have power in prayer and winning others to Christ, one must lay down the required price.

What is the price of power? Jesus had a talk with Peter and the others in the latter part of Matt. 16:21-23. He was telling them of the cross experience ahead and then in a few simple words He states the first standard of power and then the price to be paid to reach that standard. Listen to him: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

I. FOOTPRINTS OF JESUS

First as we look at these familiar words - "If any man would come after me" -- that is the standard set before us.

Note he did not say, I was to be a pillar in the church, a fundamentalist, a Bible student, but to tread in the footprints of Jesus!

Think back into the marvelous life of Jesus. A human life remember. He was the Son of God, lived his life down here as a son of man. Think of his power over temptation, the fierce wilderness struggle; His power over Satan, over man possessing demons, over disease. Recall the power of his rare unselfishness, His tenderness of speech, his unfailing love to all classes, His power as a soul winner, His power in prayer.

There are some of the suggestions of Jesus' Standard of Power. Would you go after Him?

You may -- for as the Father sent him even so sends He us, to do the same work and live the same life.

Before you answer that question (would you go after Him) there is another side in His life to that "come after me".

When opposites are brought into contact a violent disturbance follows.

Such a life, as Jesus, in the atmosphere of this world, will provoke bitter enemies.

Listen: He was criticized and slandered, they said he was fanatical "besides Himself". They laughed him to scorn, reviled him. Picked his words and kind deeds. Attempts were made upon His life at Nazareth and Jerusalem. A conspiracy was planned six months before his death by the officials of Jerusalem. At last, he was arrested, mocked and spit upon, struck with open hand, crowned with thorns, and finally killed a cruel, lingering, tortured death.

"If any man would come after me."

II. FIXED WILL

Second, as we consider the footprints of Jesus, we discover the footprints to be fixed in a solid purpose.

The word "if" is an open question. People understand Jesus' words but hesitate, shrink back. Not sure they desire such a solid fixed path.

"If any man would" -- would is the past tense of will. The word will is one of the strongest in our language. A man's will is the kingly part of man. The King on the Throne, the Judge on the bench, appeals not to sentiment but a fixed will. He calmly settles upon a fixed purpose, no matter what it costs.

How many of you would follow Jesus blindly? Some one would say, "Why talk like that, nobody is required to suffer today as He did?"

id I am not sure about that. I read about a young man in south India, bright fellow, full of power from a high class family, who heard ^{About} Jesus and felt the personal appeal of that marvelous story. He thought what it meant and what might be involved in a decision to follow Christ. His family pleaded, threatened, and finally his Father violently put him out of the life long home. Became an outcast.

id We might use another illustration of a young woman, from New England, decided to be a Christian. She wrote the young man of her life and told about her new step. She felt he would be glad. He was not a Christian, and did not want a wife that was one. It was a crisis, but she must follow her master's leading. And so she decided.

Doubtless if you follow Jesus absolutely in all things you will find a sharp line of separation drawn against you, as Jesus did in Palestine. Many a social door would be shut in your face. Society thinks it is bad to get excited about following Jesus.

id This week I heard a student from the University of Richmond, one of our Southern Baptist Colleges in Virginia, give a personal testimony. He told how he left home feeling that he was able to deal with the problems in his life. Soon after enrolling in the University, he felt lonely and insecure. Not knowing where to turn he looked up the chaplain. He said, "I found my problem was the absence of Jesus Christ." He made a commitment to Christ and is a member of the Bon-Air Baptist Church. He said, "I found the answer on the campus. I didn't have to look other places. Others will follow me at the University and I know there is spiritual help for them."

Let us go a little farther, note the steps -- footprints of Jesus, a fixed will, and next forsaking wickedness.

III. FORSAKING WICKEDNESS - ("Let him deny himself".)

What does that mean. Deny - means to say "NO" plainly and positively.
Himself - means his self.

Not something temporarily done in order to gain some advantage. People practice self-denial in things that are not even spiritual.

The suggestion here is more radical. There are three persons referred to in V. 24. "Any man"; "himself"; and "me".

Say "NO" to his self is coupled with follow me."

Trans
The opposite of this text implies "If any man will not do as I desire, he will continue to do as he is now doing, namely, deny me and follow his self."

The two persons self and Jesus are placed here in sharpest contrast.

An uncompromising antagonism exists between them. They are sworn foes, and every man must decide to which he will yield his allegiance. If he says yes to the desires of self he is saying "no" to Jesus. On the other hand if he yields to the wishes of Jesus he plainly says "no" to his self.

What is this in us, that Jesus instructs us to say a hard uncompromising "NO" to?

Living (inside of each one) of us, is an individual, referred to by the words "his self".

"Self" - covets praise. It seeks importance and wishes to impress others. It is fond of a mirror. It shrinks from criticism. It is always on the defensive. It is that touchy thing in you. Its feelings are readily hurt. It remembers grievances, What will they think? What will they say?

vel A Sunday School teacher who had a class of rather rough boys. A minister asked how she was getting along with them. Her reply, "I'm going to give them up." Is that so? Have they all become Christians? No, none of them were Christians. The Preacher knew there must be some reason. So he ventured to suggest before giving them up. "Have the boys come up to your home, one at a time, serve him tea and cookies, have a pleasant chat, then have a friendly talk about becoming a Christian and close with prayer."

Her face blushed as red and her reply was "he'd laugh at me."

She could not bear the possible chance of being laughed at. Even missing the possible chance of winning a soul. That is "self"!

Do you recognize the individual inside of you that Jesus is speaking of?

"Self" - loves to have its own way. It has plans of ambitions regardless of man or God.

Jesus wants to get control of us. He says there is only one thing to do with self. No half-way compromise will do.

There is a war - "self" and Jesus.

Paul says our enemy is "flesh" - Romans 8:4-8; 12-13. Enlarge on our text of Matt. 16:24.

Take the word "self" and spell backwards with the letter "h" added reads

F-L-E-S-H.

A free translation of Romans 8:5 reads - "They that choose to walk after self (as a slave walked after, or behind, his Master) will show their choice by obeying the desires of self, and they that choose to walk after the Spirit will obey the desires of the Spirit."

Verse seven - "For the purposes of self are opposed to God's purposes; for it does not hold itself subject to God's wishes; indeed, in its very nature it cannot; and they that choose to obey self cannot please God."

V. 13 - "If by the Holy Spirit's aid ye kill off the plans and doings of self, ye shall therein find real true life, and only so."

There can be no patched-up truce here. In Galatians five, verse nineteen - "The deeds of self are . . . impurity, shameless looseness." Self will defeat the functions of the body. Another list is given in Ephesians 4:31. Self is Satan's personal representative in every human heart.

Matt. 16:23 - "Get thee behind me Satan." Self is Satan. Christians do not live on the self-level. "What the harm?" They live on the plain of the Master who "Pleased not himself."

The Father said this is my Son in whom I am well pleased."

Take a piece of paper and write your life plan. List habits, dress, recreation, conversation, social engagements. Would it please Him? What motive controls me?

All of this is included in "Let him deny himself." Forsaking wickedness!

Are you ready to follow Jesus in regard to what it may cost?

As we are about to complete the picture -- number the footprints of Jesus, with a fixed will, forsaking the wickedness of self and finally beginning a fruitful walk!

IV. FRUITFUL WALK - "Take up His cross and follow me".

We stand now at the forks of the road. This is where the company is divided. This is the point of deciding.

We need to choose our road deliberately, prayerfully, with open eyes.

The road to the left is yielding to self.

The right hand road is following Christ! This means I want none of self but all of Thee.

I will take up his cross. Say no to self and nail it to the cross.

Paul said - "I have been crucified with Christ." Put to death the doings of self, the only thing to do with this self is to kill it. I put it on the cross

daily. If Christ is Lord of your life then self is on the cross dying.

This decision must be made by each person.

Further, each church must make such a choice.

The 157th Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, meeting in Richmond, was challenged by the President ^{ALLAN} Gaines to accept the stewardship of human response to God.

Six resolutions were passed -- one, Thanks to the First Baptist Church for hospitality. Second, gratitude to veterans who have served in defense of our country. Third, that the \$20,000 exclusion tax for foreign missionaries be restored. Fourth, affirm our belief in soul liberty under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Fifth, in regard to God hearing the prayers from Jews - we reaffirm our faith in the centrality of Jesus Christ in man's salvation, and that God hears the prayer of every person. Sixth, we pledge our support and our prayers in behalf of President-elect Ronald Reagan and those to whom the guidance and leadership of our nation is entrusted.

Mixed in with business sessions were meetings of inspiration. I mention two speakers, the first is Coach Dal Shealy - University of Richmond. He is a graduate of Carson Newman College, Tenn. His first words told the story of his life and work -- he said, "Greatest business is being a Christian." He said "I made a decision to follow Christ about age six. I was a phoney, at age 29, I made him Lord of my life." He said, "I am living in the middle of a miracle. My faith is the

~~to~~ solution of life. ^{The} Person of Jesus Christ can help overcome any problem." One of the first things he did at the beginning of the year was to invite the Gideons to come out to the University and present each football player with a Bible. He related how three of the players accepted Christ as Saviour in chapel before one of their games and how on another occasion three more trusted Christ. Coach Dal Shealy will be featured on the 700 Club - November 20. It makes us proud, that we as Baptists, have a dedicated coach, ^{staff} who talks about prayer, love, and serving the Lord with conviction.

Another speaker this week was Dr. Tanner of the Home Mission Board. We now have 3,016 home missionaries under appointment. His message was on John 3:16. He told the story of a little eight year old girl. Who had no parents. She had been moved around to at least three places, because she was hard to manage. The children had rules at the orphanage. One was, that each letter sent, had to be read by the officials. One day someone noticed this girl putting a letter in the tree branch by the front gate. The Director of the orphanage ordered some one to secure the letter. This is how it read - "To any body who finds this, I love you!"

Years ago God saw you and me in sin. He sent his Son down to die on a cross, He was saying, I love you, I love you!

Jesus sends no one ahead alone. He blazes out every path through the unknown.

He asks us simply to come along after Him. He did, what he asks us to do.

He stands ahead in that path now, with outstretched arms in open invitation --

Let us follow. Here is the price of power - any man may step in His footsteps, deny self, love Him enough to take up His cross and begin a fruitful walk.

The singing of this hymn is your signal. If you have decided to take the right fork of the road - come now and make that choice public. There must be several who should respond, make your own feelings known -- none of self and all of Thee!