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Rev. Hargrave's Sermons



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IN
APPALACHIA

These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish. Rev. 14:4,5.

The Ideal Christian Life

This is a picture, we are told, furnished by revelation of a redeemed society. It's fullness is realized in the life which is to come; its beginnings are here and now. Although, therefore, the vision of life which is painted for us here belongs in its fullness to the future, we may see its outlines in the present, see now the characteristics of the life here sketched for us; and we ought to be striving after this ideal every day.

I. In the first place it is a complete following of Christ. Not just a part of the way, when things are going well and everything is lovely, but also when things are disagreeable, when sacrifice is needed, when the way is dark and rough and lonesome. Following Christ is the alpha and omega of the Christian life, and without it there can be no Christian life. To follow Him in the general sense is to live in His spirit, the spirit of trust and obedience towards God, and of loving interest and service towards men, which He manifested. And to follow Him in the particular sense is to say every day with honest and earnest purpose, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? not, 'What are others doing,' but 'What is the will of My Master for me? Nothing is clearer to a student of the ways of Christ with men than that His will differs for different people. He does not require of me to live the life of some one else; He wants me to live to the fullest my own life. I must fulfill the purpose of my own mission. I was sent into the world for a purpose. I must find out what that purpose is and try to accomplish it.

II. In the second place, we come upon the secret of this absolute following: "These were purchased." That means that we are not our own. The atonement of Christ is not a cold legal transaction, by virtue of which a certain number of souls are passed over from the power of evil to the power of good; it is not thus that men are bought, but by goodness, by love, by the infinite grace of Christ the will is won over, the love of man for God is created, the devotion of the heart is purchased.

III. We see the result of following Christ manifested in the character of these elect souls. In their mouth was no lie: they are without blemish. Christ imparts this purity to those who follow Him. A more perfect following of Christ, a more perfect union with Him, will mean a more perfect purity. There is nothing that the Bible more strongly insists upon than that we shall be true. And they are without spot, they are pure and clean. Nothing pains a man who is truly seeking to follow Christ, nothing gives him such agony of soul, as the spots and stains that are in his thoughts and desires, on his inner life, spots which he sometimes thinks are gone, which break out again

and again, visible it may be to no eye but his own and God's. But it is not impossible, and we are not to lose the desire. It may take a lifetime to achieve it, but it will certainly be achieved by the man who earnestly seeks it, and seeks it in the right way. The grace of patience must be developed in our life. God does not deal with us after our sins. The Psalmist said: He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Ps. 103:10.

There must be also an entire consecration of our all to Him. We must join the poet in saying: Consecrate me now, to thy service, Lord, with the power of thy grace divine.

May my soul look up with a steadfast hope
And my will be lost in thine.

The ideal Christian life is a life of service. We count it a privilege to serve. We serve Him by serving humanity. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me; are the words of the Master. They inspire and prompt to action many a Christian pilgrim. The Master is his example in obedience. The ideal Christian is always found in the school of the Lord. He seeks to know the will of the Lord. That he may do that will in all of his relationships. And he interprets the will of the Lord to apply to daily social relationships. In business, he deals honestly; his word is 100% true. He meets obligations promptly, recognizing that he has to give account unto God for all his actions. He appropriates Paul's words to Timothy as having a personal application when he said: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. II Tim. 2:15.

My Christian friends, it means something to be a Christian, and to live the Christian life. We have said that the ideal Christian life is a complete following of Christ. That necessitates one's knowing Christ and His ways. We recognize the secret of this following Him to be in the fact that we are not our own, but we have been purchased by the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; Again we recognize those who are His followers because they are Christlike in Character. Men and women looking upon them, see Christ in them. They who follow Christ in this life, shall live with Christ in the life to come.

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