

Useful

A NEVER-FAILING LAW OF LIFE. Mt. 10:39; Mt. 16:25; Mk. 8:35; Luke 9:24; Lu. 17:33; John 12:25

The importance of the message I bring to you today can hardly be overestimated. Its source is Jesus himself. He evidently spoke it with slight variations on four different occasions when His disciples were present. The Holy Spirit considered it so important as to have it recorded six times in the gospels, as follows:

"He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it."

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it."

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

"Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it (Gr. save it alive)"

"He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

These words are paradoxical in form. Here is a profound statement, yet its meaning is obvious. Self-seeking is self-destroying. Self-sacrifice is the path to true life. To make self the main object of life is the sure way to destroy self. But to lose one's self for Christ's sake is the sure way to find the true life eternal. It is the principle of the cross, a never failing law of life.

"Live for self you live in vain; Live for Christ you live again."

Let us look at the four different occasions when Jesus spoke these words:

1. Matthew 10:39. He is sending forth his twelve disciples on a missionary tour. He commissions, cautions, encourages, and tells them of the cost of discipleship.

"He indoctrinated the dozen that they might evangelize the million."

As He nears the climax of his charge to them we find the first mention of the cross in the New Testament. He says, "And he that doth not take up his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

If Christian leadership is worthy of the name, and is to accomplish its mission successfully, this fundamental law of life here stated by Jesus must be followed. As He sends you forth as witnesses for Him, whether on the college campus, or in the home, the church, or to the ends of the earth, or to give to drink ^{one} of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, be sure to remember, as one has stated it, that it is "in the unselfish seeking of life for others that the redeemed life finds its own greatest achievement and happiness."

A song which is in the form of a prayer that I learned in Sunday school years ago has these words:

"Lord, help me live from day to day, In such a self forgetful way,

That even when I kneel to pray, My prayer shall be for others.

Others, Lord, yes, Others; let this my watchword be,

Help me to live for others, That I may live like Thee."

2. Mt. 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24. The second occasion in the Biblical record when Jesus stated this never failing law of life was of such tremendous importance that it is recorded by each of the first three gospels. It was following His first announcement of His own sufferings upon the cross, and just before His transfiguration. You remember Peter's Satanic reaction to this announcement. Like you and I he was tempted to want the crown without the cross—a temptation of the same nature of the temptation ^{of} Satan proposed to Jesus in the wilderness. In the hour of personal need of victory over Satan we do well to remember and observe this principle of the cross. Later in his life Peter remembered and experienced self-renunciation for Christ's sake, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote his first epistle which so wonderfully develops the theme.

"Through Suffering to Glory."

**"Must Jesus bear the cross alone, And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone, And there's a cross for me."**

**The consecrated cross I'll bear Till death shall set me free;
And then go home my crown to wear, For there's a crown for me."**

3. Luke 17:33. The third occasion where Jesus uttered these words, as far as recorded, was in the third stage of His going up to Jerusalem to be crucified. It was a short time before the triumphal entry. He was teaching His disciples about the coming of the kingdom. He indicated something of the world catastrophe which they might expect in connection with the second coming of Christ to the world. At the time of this supreme world crisis will this law of life thru sacrifice still hold good? By way of warning He says, "Remember Lot's wife"—what she did at the time of the catastrophe at Sodom, and the fateful result to her. Her thought was on earthly things. Her interest was in perishing possessions. After saying, "Remember Lot's wife" Jesus continued the thought of that great day coming, and repeats, "Whoever seeks to gain his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life shall save it alive." This unchanging principle applies in the present time, and it will apply at the end of the age. Thomas a Kempis said, "The sign of the cross shall be in heaven when the Lord cometh to judgment."

4. John 12:25. The fourth occasion when Jesus spoke these words was in all probability on that most eventful Tuesday just before the crucifixion. On that previous Palm Sunday He had been hailed as King. Perhaps that had brought Him to the attention of certain Greeks who desired to see Him. The movement of John's account which records Jesus' words at this time may be glimpsed something like this: There is presented the petition of the Greeks, "We would see Jesus". Jesus then gives a pre-vision. He said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." He sees in the approach of the Greeks, as one has stated it, "a first-fruit of the harvest to be reaped thru His dying." As the King come to Zion He foreshadows what He is to effect at the Cross, namely the destruction of the Empire of Satan, and the establishment of the universal spiritual kingdom of the King of kings. He then illustrates this law of life thru sacrifice by a parable from nature of the grain of wheat. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit." In the words of another, "Christ's life thru death propagates similar lives." Then comes that deep yet simple paradoxical statement of Jesus, "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

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The law of life thru sacrifice has its matchless illustration at Calvary. It has its unchanging illustration in nature. It has its practical application in the precept and promise of Jesus which immediately follow. Not only must the King gain the crown by way of the cross, but also the way of the servant of the King must be thru suffering to glory. Jesus continues to say, "If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me him will the Father honor."

When I was a student at Centre College I attended a Young People's Conference at Blue Ridge. At a vesper service out in front of Robert E. Lee hall I heard Dr. Robert E. Spear make a talk based on these words of Jesus. That was just about 40 years ago. Today I cannot tell you anything of the words of R. Spear, but I do remember what Jesus said to me that day. "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." These very words of Jesus so gripped me that they have blessed my life to this day.

What are you doing or going to do with your life? It has been pointed out that a grain of wheat may be eaten or it may be sown into the ground. Your life may be eaten or it may be sown. It may be devoted to self-gratification, or it may be yielded as a living sacrifice.

the apostle

Shall you not join in saying ~~with~~ from the heart, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that one died for all, therefore all died, and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him, who for their sakes died and rose again."

"Have you heard the tale of the Aloe-Plant, that grows in the southern clime?
By an humble growth of an hundred years it reaches its blooming time.
And then in a wondrous bud at its crown, bursts into a thousand flowers;
Tis a floral queen, in its beauty seen,
The pride of the tropical bowers.

Have you further heard of the aloe plant that blooms in the southern clime?
How everyone of its thousand flowers, as they fall at the blooming time,
Is an infant plant, that fastens its root in the place where it falls on the ground;
And as fast as they fall from the dying stem,
Grows lively and lovely around.

Have you heard the story of the pelican-the Arab's gimmel-bar?
Have you heard how it loves its tender young,
And toild and cares for their good;
It brings them water from fountains afar,
It searches the sea for their food;
In famine it gives them what love can devise,
The blood of its bosom, and in feeding them, dies.

Have you heard the tale they tell of the swan, the snow white bird of the lake?
It quietly floats on the silvery waves, it silently sits in the br ake.
It saves its song til the close of life, and then in the soft still even,
Mid the golden light of the setting sun, it sings as it soars towards heaven.
And the beautiful notes fall back from the skies;
Tis its only song, for in singing, it dies.

Have you heard these tales, shall I tell you of One, far greater and better than they?
Shall I tell you of Him whom the heavens adore,
Before whom the host of them fall?
How He left the choir and the anthems above, for the earth with its wailing and woe;
To suffer the pain and shame of the Cross, to die for the life of His foes?
O Prince of the Nobles! O sufferer Divine!
What sorrow and sacrifice equal to Thine?

Now hear these tales, ye weary and sad, who for others do give up your all.
The seed that is nourished in the earth's dark bosom must fall.
The seed that seems lost in the earth below, will return many fold in the ear;
By death comes life, by loss comes gain;
The joy for the tear, the peace for the pain.

"For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it."