

All He Asks Is All We Have

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Why do so many people fail in living the Christian life? While many answers have been offered, I believe there is one overriding reason that fits every case. People have failed either to understand or have been unwilling to surrender to the central requirement of faithful discipleship: **Jesus must be absolutely first in our lives.**

He has made plain the preeminence He must have. We must love Him more than material things (Mat. 6:19–24). This means we must not neglect our service to Him in order to amass wealth. Also, we must generously support His service with our wealth. Further, we must not seek wealth by dishonest or dishonorable means.

He told us plainly that we must love Him even more than our dearest ones on earth (Mat. 10:34–37). This means that one must not yield to family pressures that would cause him to disobey Christ. Even if one's family disowns him for becoming a Christian, he must still serve the Lord.

The basic (and most difficult) sacrifice He asks of us is **self**. We must present our bodies as "living sacrifices" unto God (Rom. 12:1). Jesus said his followers must "deny [no longer recognize, refuse to acknowledge] self" (Luke 9:23). We must be crucified with Christ so that self no longer lives, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). This difficult challenge is the major point of failure. A generation that has grown up on a steady diet of "do your own thing" and "if it feels good, do it" does not find it easy to give up its fornication, its alcohol and drug consumption, its materialism, and all of its other selfish sin and shame.

Even some saints care more about their "right" to drink their beer than the hope of Heaven. Our age is convenience-crazy and pleasure-mad. Our world operates like Israel in the days of the Judges: "...every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6). Men have become vain in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts are darkened, leading them into unspeakable evils (Rom. 1:18–32).

We lament to say that this is true of many of the elect. If you doubt it, consider how many church members attend worship, Bible classes, and other spiritual activities of the church only when they please and do what they please otherwise, with hardly a passing thought. Consider how many are still "stiff-necked" about giving generously of their money, in spite of the numerous strong Scriptural examples and demands. Worldliness among the saints is

winked at in many, if not most, congregations. The sad truth is that many of **us** do exactly what **we** want to do in both doctrine and practice, just like the world. We can never be faithful to Christ until we understand that what He asks of us is all we have.

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