

The Dailyness of the Christian Life

by Ian G. North

The main thing in the Christian life is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and daily renewing in our walk with God.

Duration: 31:11

Scripture: Hebrews 3:12

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a widow in his congregation who was very exuberant in her praise during his sermons. He found her outbursts disruptive and asked her to control herself. However, she explained that she couldn't help it and it just came naturally to her. The preacher then made a deal with her, promising to give her a new pair of boots if she could control herself for six weeks. The sermon emphasizes the importance of daily praise and prayer, and the main focus of a Christian teacher. It also highlights the power of prayer and intercession, as demonstrated by a teacher who prayed for his students and saw them all come to know Christ. The sermon concludes by reminding believers to keep Christ at the center of their lives and to guard against sinful and unbelieving hearts.

Transcript

Keeping the main thing, the main thing. Keeping Christ in the center of education. That's a big subject, but as I thought about it, when it comes down to it, the whole is no stronger than the parts that make the whole.

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. And when it comes right down to the main thing being the main thing, it resolves itself into what is the main thing for you as a teacher? What is the main thing? I wonder how you'd answer that if you wrote it down. What is the main thing for you as a Christian teacher? Well, we'll probably talk about that in our workshop a little more, but we can think of many things that are very, very important for a Christian teacher.

But I'd like to just focus on one thought this morning. I think if you'd ask the Apostle Paul, Paul, what is the main thing in your life? Well, Paul has been called a one-thinger because in Philippians chapter three, he says, this one thing I do. What do you mean, Paul, one thing? You're a missionary, you're a teacher, you're a disciple, you travel, you do many things.

I think for the Apostle Paul, there was one main thing. He said, this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth to the things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ. It seems to me that for Paul, the main thing was his personal appropriation of Christ, his personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

And I would like to ask the question this morning, is that the main thing for you? Your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? I'd like to ask, how is your fellowship with Jesus Christ this morning? Is he a living, bright reality to you? Everything flows from that. Look at John chapter 15, for example. In John chapter 15, our Lord uses the allegory of a vine, very well-known passage, just this verse.

I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

Now in that verse, what is the main thing? What's the main thing? What's the main thing? I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

In the mind of Jesus Christ, as he spoke those words to his disciples, what was the main thing? Was it that they would bear fruit? Was it the outcome or the expression of their existence? Was that the main thing? Some of you are nodding, some are going that way. Most of you are going that way. Good.

The main thing was what? Abiding, remaining in the vine. Yes, the main thing in the mind of Jesus Christ was the disciples' relationship with him. If there's no vine life, there'll be no fruit.

What is the main thing for a Christian teacher? It is that they remain in the vine. Your relationship to Jesus Christ is the main thing in your profession as a teacher. Everything flows from that.

I'd like us to think in these next few minutes, therefore, of what remaining in the vine means. And I speak of it as the dailyness of our Christian life. The dailyness of our Christian life.

Remaining in the vine. A.J. Gordon says, regeneration and renewal are related to each other as the planting of the tree is related to its growth. We need to understand the difference between regeneration and renewing.

Regeneration is the initial receiving of Christ and new life in him. Renewing is a daily process. Daily.

The dailyness of our Christian walk. The Apostle Paul speaks of this in 2 Corinthians, chapter four, and verse 16. Therefore, we do not lose heart.

Though outwardly, we are wasting away, yet inwardly, we are, what does it say? Being renewed. How often? Day by day. Day by day.

Daily renewing. And I would suggest to you that that's the main thing. And to keep the main thing, the main thing is the heart of our Christian experience.

Keeping the main thing, the main thing. Daily renewing. Good resolutions won't last unless there's a daily renewing.

Being filled with the Spirit won't last unless I learn to walk in the Spirit. The daily renewing. I want to emphasize this dailyness of our Christian life.

This means that every day, certain things have to happen. If we are going to keep the main thing, the main thing. Every day, these things must happen in our personal life if we're to keep the main thing, the main thing.

Remember the Apostle Paul said, we have not stopped praying for you that you may grow in the knowledge of God. And the Apostle Peter said that we should grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Are you growing? Is Christ more real to you today than he was a year ago? Are you being renewed day by day in your walk with God? I feel that great need myself to be renewed in my inner life.

Paul talks about it, being renewed in our inner man, inwardly renewed. Paul in Romans 12 verse two talks about the renewing of our mind. In Titus chapter three, the Apostle Paul says that this renewing takes place through the operation of the Holy Spirit who is poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.

So these are the things that will happen daily in the life of a person whose mind is being renewed. And by these, we keep the main thing, the main thing. Number one, Luke chapter nine and verse 23.

Then he said to them all, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross. How often? Daily. And follow me.

Jesus Christ said, if you want to follow me, you must begin the day by taking up your cross. Did you take up your cross this morning when you got out of bed or before you got out of bed? Bishop Taylor Smith was one of the great godly Anglicans of England some generations ago, a mighty man of God. It is said that Taylor Smith, when he woke up in the morning, before he moved from his bed, he would pray every morning, Lord, make this bed an altar and my body a living sacrifice.

So he began every day with that attitude. The apostle Paul said, I die. How often? Daily.

Paul said that. I die daily. He said, always carrying around in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be revealed in my mortal body.

Oh, that must happen daily. Did you take up your cross today? If you want to follow me, you must take up your cross daily, Jesus said, and follow me. Secondly, Acts chapter 17, we see the apostle Paul on his missionary journey.

And he has been in Thessalonica where he was not very warmly received. And he went on his way down to the town of Berea. And we read this.

On arriving there, he went to the Jewish synagogue. Verse 11. Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures.

What does it say? Daily. They examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. The second thing that must happen if we are to keep the main thing, the main thing is daily meditation on God's word.

Daily, we must allow that word to wash our inner life and our thoughts. Psalm 1, verse 2, his delight is in the law of the Lord. And in his law, he does meditate day and night.

Now this was David, David, the chief executive officer of the nation, but he had time to meditate in God's word day and night. It was his daily exercise. It was D.L. Moody, that evangelist of another generation who said, either this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.

We need that daily meditation on God's word that God may speak to us very clearly. Colossians 3, 16, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. He wasn't writing to pastors.

He was writing to ordinary Christians like you and me. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Is his word dwelling in you richly? Is it? And then thirdly, Psalm 145, verse 2. Psalm 145, verse 2. Every day, I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever.

Every day, I will praise you. God dwells in the midst of the praises of his people. Here the Psalmist says, daily, we must be praising God.

Daily, exalting him. I will extol you daily. And we're to do it with all our heart, not just singing hymns or public worship.

It's something from the heart. Psalm 138, verse 1. I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart. I wonder if you've heard of the little Chinese lady, Harry Liu, a delightful Chinese evangelist, told me years ago about a little Chinese widow who lived in a remote part of China, a very poor area.

And it was the kind of area where it was very difficult to buy what we would consider the basic necessities of life. Even a pair of shoes would be very difficult for them to buy. Well, the little congregation met every Sunday and this little widow was so exuberant in her worship and praise that often as the preacher was giving his message, she would interject with, praise the Lord.

And he would sort of gather his thoughts and concentrate again and then go on. A little later, praise the Lord. She was so exuberant in her praise.

Well, this was disturbing the congregation and it was disturbing the preacher. So he went to see her. And after their pleasantries had been exchanged, he said, there's something I have to talk to you about.

I wish you wouldn't be so vocal or loud in your praise while I'm preaching. She said, I can't help it, Pastor. It just comes.

Well, he said, look, I'll make a deal with you. I'm not sure what that is in Chinese, but she said, oh, what do you mean? He said, if you will control yourself for six weeks, I'll give you a new pair of boots. Well, her eyes sparkled, a new pair of boots.

And she said, all right, it's a deal. Well, next Sunday, he preached. Everything was quiet and orderly.

Next Sunday, he preached. Fourth, fifth Sunday, he thought he had it licked. Came the sixth Sunday, he was preaching.

He reached a high point of inspiration. Suddenly she jumped up, threw her hands up and said, boots or no boots, praise the Lord. Well, we might not have that same exuberant expression of praise, but surely there should be within our hearts the praise of God with all our heart.

And this should be a daily thing. Daily, we are to praise him, boots or no boots. And then fourthly, Psalm five, verse three.

Psalm five and verse three. In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning, I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.

He doesn't say every Sabbath, O Lord, you hear my voice. The implication is that every morning, this man entered into the exercise of prayer and intercession. Daily, we are to spend time in prayer and intercession.

Well, we hear these things, but do we do these things? Prayer is the soul's breath and we are to engage in that kind of praying. He says, in the morning, I lay my requests before you. In second Timothy, chapter one, verse three, Paul is writing to his young friend, Timothy.

He says, I constantly remember you in my prayers. Day and night. Think of that.

Daily, he remembered his friend in his prayers. Day and night. Is that an exercise of your heart? Do you find that coming forth? That time with God? Oh, we sometimes think of it as a kind of duty.

I remember in India, meeting a missionary lady and she said, my time with God has just gone through a revolution, a transformation. I said, tell me, how did it happen? Well, she said, my time previously was the quiet time and I felt I had to observe a quiet time every day and it became a burden and a formality. And then one day, I met a fellow missionary and she began to tell me what a wonderful, delightful thing it was for her to be able to meet her Lord every day and to know that when she got up, Jesus was over there already in that room, waiting for her.

And suddenly, the light dawned. The missionary lady had been regarding the quiet time as a duty instead of a delight, as an obligation. Instead of a meeting with her Lord.

It transformed her attitude to realize that Jesus is over there before you are and he's waiting for you. He loves you. He wants you to meet with him daily.

Her attitude was changed and she found him in a new way. A pastor said that when he was a boy in Sunday school, he was one of a number of boys, the teacher of that particular Sunday school class went to the superintendent and said, please relieve me of this. I can't handle these boys.

And he asked to be released from his promise to teach them. The superintendent persuaded him to try again and to promise that every day for three months, for three months, he would pray for every one of those boys in secret. He agreed.

And he began to pray for every one of those boys by name. At the end of three months, every boy in the class had come to know Christ and three of them went on to become fruitful ministers of the gospel. Think of that in your role.

The priceless privilege we have. And then fifthly, Hebrews chapter three, Hebrews three, verses 12 and 13. See to it brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Here it is, but encourage one another, how often? Daily, it says, daily. Encourage one another daily as long as it is called today so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. I think one of the great omissions in our Christian experience in our churches is the omission of encouraging one another daily.

The word encourage also may involve rebuke. We don't like to be rebuked, but the Bible says rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Rebuke a wise person and that person will love you.

There's a beautiful verse in Psalm 141, verse five. Let a righteous man strike me, it is a kindness. Let him rebuke me, it is oil on my head.

My head will not refuse that oil. Daily, have you encouraged somebody today? As Christians are we doing that? Are we really seeking to encourage one another, how often? Daily, think of it, before the sun sets today, may God use you to encourage somebody in their walk with God, why? So that we might not turn away from the living God, so that we may not be hardened in our hearts. We need encouragement, we need rebuke, we need the dynamic that comes when we accept responsibility for each other spiritually and thus we'll maintain the right thing.

And then sixth, and I'm coming to the close, in Acts chapter five, verses 41 and 42, the apostles left the Sanhedrin, the high court, rejoicing because they'd been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name, day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. Daily, communication of the truth of Jesus Christ, daily. Now that doesn't mean door knocking every day or taking people by the throat every day and ramming it down their necks.

Wasn't it Francis of Assisi who said that we should be continually preaching the gospel and if necessary, use words. There needs to be that continual communication by our life and then as appropriate, by words. But all the time, every day, there should be on our heart the concern.

You shall be, he didn't say you shall do, witnessing. By your life, you will be witnesses unto me. People interpret our Christian faith by the life that we live and that too is part of our daily expression.

I'm sure that you as Christian teachers, whether you're a math teacher or history or geography or English, whatever you are teaching, in your heart is the concern that you might know creative ways of communicating Jesus Christ in the classroom. I don't know, in my experience as a boy, of one teacher that showed interest in my spiritual life, both in government school and in a church-related school. Not, I cannot recall one teacher who showed a personal interest in my spiritual life.

That's tragic and that should be part of our daily concern. Paul said, I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh. He carried that burden daily for other people that they might be saved.

And then seventh, in Matthew chapter 24 and verse 42. Matthew 24, verse 42. Therefore, keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

You don't know what day the Lord will come. Therefore, we must be daily watchful and daily ready for his coming. A daily expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ so that his coming will not be an interruption.

We are to love the appearing of Jesus Christ. And if you don't love his appearing, there's something wrong. There's something that needs adjusting.

Paul said, I've finished my course. I've kept the faith. I've fought a good fight.

Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day. And not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing, his appearing. So there was a daily expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3, 11 and 12, in light of the coming of Christ says, you ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. You and I can speed the coming of the Lord, he says. But we are to look forward to that and we are to live holy lives.

And to this end, you were chosen. As it says, you were chosen in him before the foundation of the world that you should be holy and blameless in his sight. The calling of God.

And this is part of our daily exercise, daily readiness for his coming. Well, here are the seven works of faith. I say works of faith because faith without works is dead.

But these are works of faith that help us to keep the main thing the main thing. To keep your relationship with Jesus Christ vibrant and real, personal and practical. I love the hymn, O Jesus Christ, grow thou in me and all things else received.

My heart be daily nearer thee. From sin be daily freed. By this, we will keep the main thing the main thing.

Let's bow together in prayer. I wonder if you would make this your prayer just in these closing couple of minutes. Would you as a group pray this after me line by line? Would you pray this after me aloud altogether? O Jesus Christ, grow thou in me and all things else received.

My heart be daily nearer thee. From sin be daily freed. Our Lord, we pray that through our lives, your light might shine, be glorified, be exalted.

And this we pray in Jesus name, amen.

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