

Skyland Conference 1980-11 Christian Stewardship

by Stan Ford

Stan Ford's sermon on Christian stewardship emphasizes selflessness, love, and the importance of serving others for Christ's sake.

Duration: 30:35

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, John 13:34, John 13:37, Romans 8:17, Romans 12:1, Romans 15:30, 2 Corinthians 4:11

Topics: "Christian Stewardship", "Selfless Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of love and selflessness in the Christian life. He references the example of Jesus washing the disciples' feet as a demonstration of love and service. The speaker also highlights the need for believers to die to self and endure suffering for the sake of Christ. He encourages listeners to show empathy, forgiveness, and offer supplication in their relationships with one another. The sermon is based on the Gospel of John, particularly chapter 13, and includes references to other biblical passages.

Transcript

...and the thirteenth chapter, the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. Now I can't speak for you, I don't know. I can only speak for myself.

And I must confess, as I've listened to the ministry of Brother Taylor, and as in preparing for that which I have wanted to share with you, I have come to the conclusion that the Lord has given to us a tremendous task to do. And I can't help but feel that there are many of us who feel it's too great for us. It's too vast.

And so this evening I want, if I may, just to look at it, to try and see the vastness of it, but also to remember that there's a power that's greater than our power, that we can go and translate this into our daily living. I have one phrase on my heart. I would like just to read it.

The Gospel of John, chapter thirteen, and verse thirty-seven. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? Why can't I do these things you've been talking about? Why can't I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake, for thy sake. I don't feel critical of Peter when he made this statement.

I know the Lord immediately had to remind him that the task was too great for him, but I don't want to stand in criticism of him because I am sure there are many of us here today who've said, Lord, I'll lay down

my life for thy sake. And I believe that the Lord takes us in our promise. If later there's some failure, if later we don't achieve the standard that we set ourselves, thank God anyway for a desire to start there.

And I'd rather a man with a desire to start than with a man who has no desire to start at all. But the phrase as I was reading it in the early hours of the morning that crossed my mind was this very simple statement, for thy sake, for thy sake, for thy sake. And it is around this phrase that tonight I want to share a thought with you.

It always thrills me when I turn into the 30th chapter of John to remember how that chapter encircles as it were a number of chapters. Or how many times have you in your Bible class traced through the Gospel of John and you've seen how every chapter brings a different aspect of love before it. For it's the Gospel of love.

And you Bible class teachers have taken your children again and again I'm sure and have shown them how each chapter unfolds the wonder of the love of God. As one often uses it, may I use it now as we think of the 10th chapter. It's the sacrifice of love, the good shepherd giving his life for the sheep.

The 11th chapter is the sympathy of love. The Lord stood and wept over the death of Lazarus. Jesus wept.

You know in the 13th chapter, it's not indeed, or the 12th chapter, it's not indeed the sympathy, it is not indeed the sacrifice of love, but the 12th chapter is the support of love. That thing that you and I don't somehow or the other know so much about. The support of love.

When Mary is accused of doing that which is wasteful, to what purpose is this waste? The Lord suddenly turns and says, let her alone, let her alone. Oh, isn't it wonderful when a Christian will say to another who's being critical of one he has the right to be critical of, let her alone. The support of love.

When we come to this 13th chapter as you know, it's the service of love. It's the day when the Lord girded himself and took a towel and walked the disciples in. Love, love, love, love, love all along the line and right through this book.

And as once again we look at this wonderful verse, never let us forget that if there is going to be any practice whatsoever of what Mr. Taylor has taught us, of what the Spirit of God has instructed us in, it's going to be in as much as we seek to love one another. As we seek to love him and love one another. What I have on my heart is simply this, that I want to talk to you about the fact that self must die.

That self must die. That suffering must be borne. What I want to talk to you about is the fact that corn must be endured and service must be given.

What I want to talk to you about is the fact that empathy must be shown and supplication must be offered. And is it not remarkable that when we take these chances that have brought before us in the past days, that we realize that it is possible, it is possible for health to die. The eleventh verse of the fourth chapter of the second letter that Paul wrote to the church at Corinth dares to tell us, For we which live are always delivered unto death for, come on, finish it Paul, for Jesus' sake.

Is that clear? That's what Peter said. Nor are laid down by life for your sake. And now you and I are exhorted that day by day we must be in that condition where we will reckon ourselves indeed to be dead unto sin but alive unto God.

And why? To Jesus. To Jesus. Oh, brethren, sisters, how essential it is for us to catch such a glimpse of Christ.

To realize that he's such a wonderful person that we're prepared to say, For we which live are being delivered into death day by day, reckoning ourselves to be dead. No longer my will but his. For Jesus.

Bishop Horton, my good gulping friend, will appreciate this story. I don't know if I understand it completely. But of course there are lots of stories I tell I don't appreciate completely.

But there it is. Bishop Horton tells the story that one day someone met him on the golf course and said, Bishop, what's your handicap? The self, he said. The self.

I say, isn't it difficult to live with self? He's the most, she's the most difficult person in the world to live with. But isn't it wonderful to know that as day by day we reckon ourselves to be dead and alive unto him, it's possible for us to say, Lord, self will die. But not only has self to die, but suffering has to be born.

It's a remarkable fact that there is not any Christian who can pass through life without some form of suffering. Some form of suffering. Philippians 1 and 29 dares to remind us, for unto you is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but to suffer for his sake.

His sake. His sake. For his sake I reckon myself to be dead.

For his sake I am willing to suffer. Please, I am not going to try and list some of the things a Christian has to endure for taking his stand for Jesus Christ. I learned long ago that some people suffer where other people don't suffer.

There are some things that would upset you and cause you suffering that never would upset me and never cause me suffering. And there are some things that would upset me and it wouldn't upset you. I only know this that one of the grandest friends I have is a brother by the name of Albert Webster who many of you know has labored for the Lord a way there in what is today called Guyana for many, many long years.

Whenever I visit Guyana I must confess that my heart is moved. I say, Albert, when are you coming home? Guyana is my home now and maybe in twenty years he hasn't had a furlough, but he's served God. I want to share with you just very briefly the story of his conversion and he was led to the Lord through his father.

And Albert Webster, that mighty man of God, was led to the Lord as a boy of twelve when one day his bricklayer father returned home and he saw his father's cross. And this was the story. His father worked on a building site in Oxford.

He was always witnessing for Jesus Christ to the laborers and the bricklayers that worked with him. Whenever the lunch hour came they went into a shed where they sat down and some of the men cooked their meal on an open fire on the top of a shovel and drank out of their billy pans. And one day some of the men said, I tell you what we'll do, we'll get him to swear.

A Christian, and they took his billy pan and they poured the cold tea out of it and they filled it up with dirty water out of a concrete mixer. And he sat down and he bowed his head, said thank you, opened his sandwiches, began to eat, took his billy pan, thirsty, worked hard all the morning, put it to his mouth, and rubbed his water. All he did was just spit it out, carry on his meal, never said a word.

The next day the same fellow said, I tell you what I'll do, we'll get him to curse and they took his sandwiches and they undid them and they took out the meat that mother had put in there and they smeared it with apple grease and shut it off. And the next day he came in and he said thank you. And put his teeth in it and spat it out.

Never said a word. The next day they said we'll get him. The filthy man went there and took a piece of iron and put it in the fire, took it with a red hawk.

And then he took it out of the fire and he put it in the place where Elbert's dad used to sit, waiting for the redness so the wood didn't so burn and smoke. And he put it there. And Elbert's dad came in and he saw the piece of metal and he put his hand out and picked it up.

It clung to his hand and burnt the skin. And he looked and said he didn't mind when they made him a tea in the dirty aquifer water or dirty water and the meat into apple grease but I never thought you'd do this. There with a burning hand he rushed off to hospital.

He came home to his boy and his boy and his wife and the other two children. They saw their dad coming home from work after dinner and wondered what was wrong. And then they saw the tears run down as he said, Mother, I didn't think they'd do that.

They never thought. And Elbert says, Dan, I was converted then because I saw what it meant to be a citizen. And my brother was converted then and he became one of the greatest preachers in our country.

And every one of the eight men on the building site were converted. But his father bore to the end of his days the fact that he had to suffer as Jesus Christ said. Please don't misunderstand me.

I don't want that to happen to me. Not me. And I won't say I wouldn't curse if that happened to me.

I only want to say this, that to every one of us there comes times when we're called to suffer in one way or another. Isn't it wonderful to know it's for his sake? But not only are we called as those who will have to pass through suffering, not only will self have to joy and suffering have to be borne, but borne will have to be endured. 1 Corinthians 4 and 10 says, we are called for, oh come on, say it out, there it is again, for Christ's sake, suffering for Christ's sake, painting ourselves dead for Christ's sake.

We are fools for Christ's sake. Fools for Christ's sake. Again and again, especially in the Bible readings, the name of William Kelly has been raised.

And one day a brother Tom reminded us that William Kelly was one of the greatest Hebrew scholars known to the Western world. But William Kelly laid aside the research part of his studies and his professorship and university side to minister to God's people. But William Kelly had a nephew, a nephew who went to Cambridge University, a nephew who also studied Hebrew.

A nephew who was so advanced in his studies that one day his professor said to him, Kelly, how is it that you're so advanced in your studies? You must be getting help. Yes sir, said he, I am. My uncle has been helping me.

Your uncle? Who's he? William Kelly. And so the professor from the University of Cambridge invited his nephew to bring his uncle to the university. And there the two great scholars met, spent a most wonderful morning discussing the word of God, the structure of the Hebrew, and all the things that great scholars do

discuss.

And then suddenly the professor from Cambridge looked at William Kelly and said, Kelly tell me, what are you doing now then? Or he said, I'm just moving here and there, helping a company of the saints. The professor looked at him and said, Kelly, you're a fool. William Kelly looked back and said, yes, but for what world? For what world? A fool for Christ's sake.

I say, the name of Commander Salway may be known to some of you. One of the great commanders of the British Navy. On the eve of the 4th of July.

Not bad, is it? For those of us that remember Commander Salway, don't remember him as a naval commander. We remember him as rather a unique, somewhat eccentric, text carrier. For when Commander Salway retired from the British Navy, he was still a commander of the Navy.

He still loved his title and made everyone use it, but he loved to get a text on the end of a poll and walk down the street. And one of the things he had, and I was reminded of it tonight, hence telling the story, I was reminded of it tonight by Mr. Detwaller when he marked him with his big umbrella. For one of the things that Commander Salway had was a large umbrella just like that one but in every avenue, now what do they call it, you know, the portion of the umbrella, he had a text.

And he had a habit of carrying the umbrella down the road and then turning it around. And it was a different text. I know so well because once in Liverpool, I saw him outside of a large store, Lewerty, and I said to myself, I think I'll pass by on the other side.

You know, a bit eccentric carrying an umbrella like that. Then I thought I'd better not and I crossed the road. And I said, Commander, the Lord bless you.

Oh, brother Stanley's back here. I'm glad you've come. I wanted to do some shopping.

Hold my umbrella. And there I stood outside of Lewerty's, looking in the shop window all the time, hoping no one would recognize me. And what I wanted to tell you about him was he had a cape.

On one side of his cape he had a fool for Christ. He'd turn it around. Who's fool are you? Isn't it wonderful to be counted as a fool for Christ? And the wonder of it is we can endure that scorn for we are fools for Christ.

But not only are we those to whom we must constantly be reminded that self must die and suffering born and scorn endured but service given. It's 2 Corinthians 4 and 5, isn't it? We treat not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and our servants. I'm sorry, Christ Jesus the Lord and your servants for Christ.

This is it. If I'm going to serve the Church of God, I can only do it when I realize it's a sin. I can't do it any other way.

They wouldn't accept it if I tried to do it any other way. And I wouldn't want to do it because I couldn't do it. But all the wonder is service can be given.

And although sometimes people will be critical of the service, nevertheless let's carry on doing it. I love the story that dear John Phillips told us when I was with him here last. Do you remember he told us about Dwight L. Moody who one day stood in his rostrum and creaked and when he finished creaking a gentleman took him on one side and said Mr. Moody I want you to know that in the first 5 sentences you

made 11 grammatical errors.

Moody looked at him and said, Sir, I know that my grammar isn't what it should be but what do you do with your grammar? Isn't that it? Brethren, sisters, I am certain that our grammar should be correct. Sir, I do not believe we ought to insult God's people by breaking the simple rules of English grammar. But I'll tell you something, I'd rather a man serve God with no grammar than not serve him with all the grammar in the world.

All that we might say. But not only shallst a giant suffering to be borne and scorn to be endured and service to be given but sympathy to be shown. We're back in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, the loveliest chapter it seems to me during these past days.

Both Father Tom and myself have returned to it again and again. Let's go back to Ephesians 4. Be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for rightly, for rightly hath forgiven us. For it is not a fact that sympathy can be shown when we realize the sympathy and forgiveness that's been shown by God.

What one of us, and I speak to my own heart, what one of us would ever have had a chance if God had not been merciful to me? I am what I am, not very much. But I am what I am because of the mercy of God. Oh, but not only sympathy is shown but supplication to be shown.

And I remind my heart this evening at the end of this series of conference gatherings of the words of the thirtieth verse of the fifteenth chapter of Romans. I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit that you strive together with me in your prayers to God. Our supplication must be offered and it is for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Could I finish what I have to say by simply asking you to join me as I quote or read a few of the verses that have become to the expression of Christ's name? Would be good. I suggest self must go. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Christ.

Jesus Christ. Suffering must be borne. Plenty was given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but to suffer for his or her.

Scorn must be endured. We are fooled for service must be given. For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for sympathy must be shown.

Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. And supplication must be offered. I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit as you join together with me in your prayers to God's work.

There is only one other verse that I can leave with you. It's the verse I would that God would burn on my heart. He was rich but for our sake he became poor.

That we through his power may be rich. If for our sake he gave everything. For his sake God grant we'll leave this place saying, Lord, all I have is yours.

For God and Father we feel very simply that we have to take together the words that we have sung at the close of this service again and again. We want to say, take my life, let it be concentrated, Lord, to this. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in peaceless time.

We bless thee for those that have made this wonderful series such a blessing to our hearts. For the conference director, dear Mr. and Mrs. Jed Wallace. Mr. and Mrs. Andrews.

Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, we thank you. All who've worked for Jim, for Larry, all very especially for Mrs. and Mr. Tiana. All that have been associated with the outside activities, thank you.

Lord, they've laid upon us such a responsibility and they've shown us what it means to live for Christ. And so we ask that we may go from this place for Christ's sake to live out our lives. Grant it we pray.

Amen. Quoting the hymn that our brother quoted in his prayers. And the 393 in the red book and 335 in the green book.

Take my life and let it be 393 in red book and 335 in the green book.

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