

Forsaking All

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the radical call of Jesus to forsake all for true discipleship, illustrating the joy and necessity of sacrificial living for Christ's sake.

Scripture: Matthew 6:19, Luke 14:33

Topics: "Discipleship", "Sacrificial Living"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the radical call of Jesus to forsake all in order to be His disciple, as stated in Luke 14:33. He argues that this demand is not limited to a select few but applies to every believer, challenging the notion that such a sacrifice is unreasonable or impossible. MacDonald illustrates that true discipleship involves a complete relinquishment of earthly treasures and a commitment to serve God wholeheartedly, drawing on examples from Scripture and the lives of devoted Christians. He reassures that those who obey this command will find joy and provision in their obedience, as God cares for those who prioritize His kingdom. Ultimately, he calls for a personal examination of what it means to forsake all for Christ, encouraging believers to live sacrificially for the gospel.

Transcript

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, one must forsake all. This is the unmistakable meaning of the words of the Savior. No matter how much we might object to such an "extreme" demand, no matter how much we might rebel against such an "impossible" and "unwise" policy, the fact remains that this is the Word of the Lord, and He means what He says.

At the outset, we should face these unbending truths:

1. Jesus did not make this demand of a certain, select class of Christian workers. He said, "Whosoever he be of you..."
2. He did not say that we must simply be willing to forsake all. He said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not..."
3. He did not say that we must forsake only a part of our wealth. He said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath..."

4. He did not say that a diluted form of discipleship would be possible for the man who holds on to his treasures. Jesus said, "...he cannot be my disciple."

Actually, we should not be surprised at this absolute demand, as if it were the only such suggestion in the Bible.

Did Jesus not say:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Matthew 6:19, 20)?

As Wesley justly said, "To lay up treasure on earth is as plainly forbidden by our Master as adultery and murder."

Did Jesus not say:

"Sell that ye have, and give alms..." (Luke 12:33)?

Did He not instruct the rich young ruler:

"...sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22)?

If He did not mean exactly what He said, what then did He mean?

Was it not true of the believers in the early church that they "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45)?

And has it not been true of many of God's saints down through the years that they literally forsook all to follow Jesus?

Anthony Norris Groves and his wife, early missionaries to Baghdad, became convinced that "they must cease to lay up treasure on earth, and that they should devote the whole of a very substantial income...to the Lord's service."¹ Groves' convictions on this subject are set forth in his booklet, CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.²

C. T. Studd "decided to give his entire fortune to Christ, and to take the golden opportunity offered him of doing what the rich young man had failed to do....It was simple obedience to the black and white statements of God's Word."³ After distributing thousands to the work of the Lord, he reserved the equivalent of \$9,588 for his new bride. She was not to be outdone by her husband. "Charlie," she asked, "what did the Lord tell the rich young man to do?"

"Sell all," he replied.

"Well then, we will start clear with the Lord at our wedding." And off went the money to Christian missions.

The same spirit of devotedness animated Jim Elliot. He wrote in his diary:

" 'Father, let me be weak that I might lose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions, Lord, let me loose the tension of the grasping hand. Even, Father, would I lose the love of fondling. How often I have released a grasp only to retain what I prized by "harmless" longing, the fondling

touch. Rather, open my hand to receive the nail of Calvary, as Christ's was opened--that I, releasing all, might be released, unleashed from all that binds me now. He thought Heaven, yea, equality with God, not a thing to be clutched at. So let me release my grasp.' "4

Our infidel hearts tell us that it would be impossible to take the words of the Lord literally. If we forsook all, we would starve. After all, we must make provision for our own future and the future of our loved ones. If every Christian forsook all, then who would finance the work of the Lord? And if there were not some Christians who were wealthy, then how could the higher class of people ever be reached with the gospel? And so the arguments come pouring forth in quick succession--all to prove that the Lord Jesus could not have meant what He said.

The fact of the matter is that obedience to the Lord's command is the most sane and reasonable life and the one that yields the greatest joy. The witness of Scripture and of experience testifies that no one who lives sacrificially for Christ will ever suffer want. When a man obeys God, the Lord takes care of him.

The man who forsakes all to follow Christ is not a shiftless pauper who expects to be supported by his fellow Christians.

1. He is industrious. He works diligently for the supply of his current necessities and those of his family.
2. He is frugal. He lives as economically as possible so that everything above immediate needs can be put into the Lord's work.
3. He is foresighted. Instead of accumulating wealth on earth, he lays up his treasures in heaven.
4. He trusts God for the future. Instead of giving the best of his life to the building up of vast reserves for old-age security, he gives his best to the service of Christ and trusts Him for the future. He believes that if he seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he will never lack food and clothing (Matthew 6:33).

To him, it is unreasonable to accumulate wealth for a rainy day. He would argue as follows:

1. How can we conscientiously hoard extra funds when the money could be used right now for the salvation of souls? "...whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

"Again, consider the important command--Love thy neighbor as thyself (Leviticus 19:18). Can we, with any truth, be said to love that neighbor as ourselves, whom we allow to starve, when we have enough and to spare? May I not appeal to any who have experienced the joy of knowing the unspeakable gift of God, and ask--'Would you exchange this knowledge...for a hundred worlds?' Let us not then withhold the means by which others may obtain this sanctifying knowledge and heavenly consolation"--A. N. Groves.

2. If we really believe that Christ's coming is imminent, we will want to put our money to use immediately. Otherwise we run the risk of having it fall into the devil's hands--money that could have been used for eternal blessing.
3. How can we conscientiously pray to the Lord to provide finances for Christian work when we ourselves have money that we are not willing to use for this purpose? Forsaking all for Christ saves us from hypocrisy in prayer.

4. How can we teach the whole counsel of God to others if there are areas of truth, such as this, which we have failed to obey? Our lives in such a case would seal our lips.

5. Clever men of the world set aside abundant reserves for the future. This is not walking by faith but by sight. The Christian is called to a life of dependence on God. If he lays up treasures on earth, how is he different from the world and its ways?

The argument is frequently heard that we must provide for the future needs of our families; otherwise we are worse than infidels. The following two verses are used to support this view:

...the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children (2 Corinthians 12:13).

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

A careful study of these verses will show that they deal with CURRENT NECESSITIES and not with FUTURE CONTINGENCIES.

In the first verse, Paul is using irony. He is the parent, and the Corinthian's are his children. He did not burden them financially, although he had every right to do so as a servant of the Lord. After all, he was their father in the faith, and parents ordinarily provide for their children, not vice versa. It is not at all a question of parents' laying up for their children's future. The whole passage has to do with the supply of Paul's present needs, not his possible future necessities.

In 1 Timothy 5:8, the apostle is discussing the care of poor widows. He insists that their relatives are responsible to care for them. If there are no relatives or if they fail in their responsibility, then the local church should care for Christian widows. But here again the subject is present needs, not future necessities.

God's ideal is that the members of the body of Christ should care for the immediate needs of their fellow believers:

"It is a matter of share and share alike. At present your plenty should supply their need, and then at some future date their plenty may supply your need. In that way we share with each other, as the Scripture says, He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack" (2 Corinthians 8:15, Phillips).

A Christian who feels he must provide for future needs faces the difficult problem of knowing how much will be enough. He therefore spends his life in pursuit of a fortune of some indefinite amount and forfeits the privilege of giving his best to the Lord Jesus Christ. He gets to the end of a wasted life and finds out that all his needs would have been provided anyway, if he had just lived wholeheartedly for the Savior.

If all Christians took the words of the Lord Jesus literally, there would be no lack of finances in the Lord's work. The gospel would go out with increased power and in increased volume. If any particular disciple faced a need, it would be the joy and privilege of other disciples to share whatever they might have.

To suggest that there must be wealthy Christians to reach the wealthy people of the world is absurd. Paul reached Caesar's household while he was a prisoner (Philippians 4:22). If we obey God, we can trust Him to arrange the details.

The example of the Lord Jesus should be conclusive in the matter. The servant is not above his Master. "It ill becomes the servant to seek to be rich, and great, and honored in this world where his Lord was poor, and mean, and despised"--George Muller.

"The sufferings of Christ included poverty, 2 Corinthians 8:9. Of course, poverty does not necessitate rags and dirt, but it does involve the lack of reserves and of the means to be luxurious...Some thirty years ago...Andrew Murray pointed out that the Lord and His apostles could not have accomplished the work they had to do had they not been actually poor. He who would lift up another must descend, like the Samaritan, and the infinite majority of mankind always have been and still are poor"--A. N. Groves.

People plead that there are certain material possessions that are necessary for home life. That is true.

People plead that Christian businessmen must have a certain amount of capital to carry on a business today. That is true.

People plead that there are other material possessions, such as an automobile, which can be used for God's glory. That too is true.

But beyond these legitimate necessities, the Christian should live frugally and sacrificially for the spread of the gospel. His motto should be, "Labor hard, consume little, give much--and all to Christ," A. N. Groves.

Each of us stands responsible to God as to what it means to forsake all. One believer cannot legislate to another; each person must act as a result of his own exercise before the Lord. It is a tremendously personal matter.

If as a result of such exercise, the Lord should lead a believer to a degree of devotedness hitherto unknown, there is no room for personal pride. Any sacrifices we make are no sacrifices at all, when seen in the light of Calvary. Beside all this, we only give to the Lord what we cannot keep anyway and what we have ceased to love.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose"--Jim Elliot.

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