

The Shadow of Martyrdom

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering one's life to Christ and living a life that is surrendered to Him, which is the most spiritually satisfying life and will be eternally rewarded.

Scripture: Matthew 10:39, Matthew 16:25, Matthew 16:27, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24, John 12:24-25, 2 Corinthians 6:9-10, Philippians 1:20

Topics: "Discipleship", "Sacrifice for Christ"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the profound commitment of true discipleship to Jesus Christ, where life and death become secondary to glorifying the Lord. He reflects on the lives of martyrs like John and Betty Stam and Jim Elliot, who willingly surrendered their lives for the sake of Christ, embodying the principle that losing one's life for Jesus leads to true fulfillment. MacDonald argues that our lives do not belong to us, as they were bought with Christ's blood, and thus we should not cling to them selfishly. He encourages believers to adopt a martyr spirit, living fully for Christ, which ultimately leads to joy and eternal rewards. The sermon concludes with a call to prioritize eternal matters over worldly concerns, echoing the teachings of Jesus on the value of self-sacrifice.

Transcript

When a man is truly committed to Jesus Christ, it seems to be a matter of no importance to him whether he lives or dies. All that matters is that the Lord be glorified.

As you read THE TRIUMPH OF JOHN AND BETTY STAM, you will find a note repeated throughout the book--"that...Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

The same undertone is found in the writings of Jim Elliot. While still a student at Wheaton College, he wrote in his diary, "I am ready to die for the Aucas."

At yet another time, he wrote, "Father, take my life, yea, my blood if Thou wilt, and consume it with Thine enveloping fire. I would not save it for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord, have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world. Blood is only of value as it flows before Thine altar."

It seems that many of God's heroes reached this same place in their dealings with God. They realized that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). They were willing to be that corn of wheat.

This attitude is exactly what the Savior taught His disciples, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).

The more we think of it, the more reasonable it seems.

First of all, our lives do not belong to us anyway. They belong to the One Who valued us with the cost of His precious blood. Can we selfishly cling to that which is Another's? C. T. Studd answered the question for himself:

I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I never understood that if He died for me, then I didn't belong to myself. Redemption means buying back, so that if I belong to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn't mine, or else I had to give up everything to God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn't seem hard to give up all for Him.

Secondly, we are all going to die anyway if the Lord does not come in the meantime. Would it be a greater tragedy to die in the service of the King or as a mere accident statistic? Was Jim Elliot not right when he said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Thirdly, it is unanswerable logic that if the Lord Jesus died for us, the least we could do would be to die for Him. If the servant is not above his master, what right do we have to go to heaven more comfortably than the Lord Jesus did? It was this consideration that prompted Studd to say, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

Finally, it is criminal to hug our lives when through their reckless abandonment eternal blessing might flow to our fellow men. Men often offer their lives in the interests of medical research. Others die to rescue loved ones from blazing buildings. Still others die in battle to save their country from enemy powers. What are the lives of men worth to us? Can we say with F. W. H. Myers:

Only like souls I see the folks thereunder,

Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,

Sharing their one hope with an empty wonder,

Sadly contented with a show of things.

Then with a rush the intolerable craving

Shivers throughout me like a trumpet call--

Oh, to save these! To perish for their saving,

Die for their life, be offered for them all.

Not all are required to lay down their lives as martyrs. The stake, the spear, the guillotine are reserved for a select few, relatively speaking. But each of us can have the martyr spirit, the martyr zeal, the martyr devotion. Each of us can live as those who have already abandoned their lives to Christ.

Come ill, come well, the cross, the crown,

The rainbow and the thunder;

I fling my soul and body down

For God to plow them under.

The Rewards Of True Discipleship

A life that is abandoned to the Lord Jesus has its own deep reward. There is a joy and pleasure in following Christ that is life in its truest sense.

The Savior repeatedly said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." In fact, this saying of His is found in the four Gospels more frequently than almost anything else He said (see Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25). Why is it repeated so often? Is it not because it sets forth one of the most fundamental principles of the Christian life, namely, that life hugged for self is life lost, but life poured out for Him is life found, saved, enjoyed, and kept for eternity?

To be a half-hearted Christian can only insure a miserable existence. To be out and out for Him is the surest way of enjoying His best.

To be a true disciple is to be a bondsman of Jesus Christ and to find that His service is perfect freedom. There is liberty in the step of all who can say, "I love my Master; I will not go out free."

The disciple is not bogged down by petty affairs or by passing things. He is concerned with eternal matters, and, like Hudson Taylor, enjoys the luxury of having few things to care for.

He may be unknown, and yet he is well known. Though constantly dying, yet he persistently lives. He is chastened but not killed. Even in sorrow, he is rejoicing. Although poor himself, he makes many rich. He himself has nothing, yet he possesses all things (2 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

And if it can be said that the life of true discipleship is the most spiritually satisfying life in this world, it can be said with equal certainty that it will be the most rewarded in the age to come. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27).

Therefore, the truly blessed man in time and in eternity is the one who can say with Borden of Yale, "Lord Jesus, I take hands off, as far as my life is concerned. I put Thee on the throne in my heart. Change, cleanse, use me as Thou shalt choose."

He Was Not Willing

'He was not willing that any should perish;'

Jesus enthroned in the glory above,

Saw our poor fallen world, pitied our sorrows,

Poured out His life for us, wonderful love!

Perishing, perishing! Thronging our pathway,

Hearts break with burdens too heavy to bear:

Jesus would save, but there's no one to tell them,
No one to lift them from sin and despair.
'He was not willing that any should perish:'
Clothed in our flesh with its sorrow and pain,
Came He to seek the lost, comfort the mourner,
Heal the heart broken by sorrow and shame.
Perishing, perishing! Harvest is passing,
Reapers are few and the night draweth near:
Jesus is calling thee, haste to the reaping,
Thou shalt have souls, precious souls for thy hire.
Plenty for pleasure, but little for Jesus;
Time for the world with its troubles and toys,
No time for Jesus' work, feeding the hungry,
Lifting lost souls to eternity's joys.
Perishing, perishing! Hark, how they call us;
Bring us your Savior, oh, tell us of Him!
We are so weary, so heavily laden,
And with long weeping our eyes have grown dim.
'He was not willing that any should perish;'
Am I His follower, and can I live
Longer at ease with a soul going downward,
Lost for the lack of the help I might give?
Perishing, perishing! Thou wast not willing;
Master, forgive, and inspire us anew;
Banish our worldliness, help us to ever
Live with eternity's values in view.

--Lucy R. Meyer

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-macdonald/the-shadow-of-martyrdom/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net