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MY DISCIPLE

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their own lives unto the death (Rev. xii. 11).

If everyone could only make up his or her mind to abandon selfishness, then all the quarrels and struggles in the world would cease, and earth would become heaven. All sins arise from selfishness. That is why our Lord commanded us to deny self and to follow Him (Sadhu Sundar Singh).

THE BEST commentary on His own words is Christ Himself and how He lived, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps". His Spirit and Word minister grace and power to enable us to do this.

In all our life and service Christ teaches us what are our right relationships to ourselves, to our loved ones, to others, and to things. In the apparently severe demands of "if any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple", and in "whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me cannot be My disciple", and in "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple"; we simply ask Him if He Himself fulfilled all these conditions; and in the answers of His life and love, the meanings come very clear of what it is to hate one's own life and one's own loved ones; of what it is to take up one's own cross and to forsake all that one has.

We see, learning of Him, that this hate is really love rightly motivated and applied. Did the Lord Jesus hate His own life? He did. He did not prize it and save it up. That is, love it. It was His to give or to keep. He gave it. He did not love Himself. He loved us. Paul speaks for us when he says: "The Son of God loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*." He who saves his own life loves it. He who loses it or gives it, hates it. How true therefore it is that he who does not hate his own life just cannot be His disciple.

Both the Father and the Son have shown us what it is to hate thus in the nearest and dearest ties of kinship. For their circle of love to widen until we were lovingly brought into the

family of God meant an attitude of God the Father to the Eternal Son spoken of by the Holy Spirit in these words: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"; and it meant an attitude of the Eternal Son to the Father spoken of by the Holy Spirit in these words: "Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." A separation and a curse to man; as high as His thoughts are above ours, He became so to God. "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Such is it to hate in the closest and most loving relationships of Being. Yet all is love—love rightly related and rightly wrought. It is for us to complete the evangelisation of the world in the love in which it was thus begun.

And whatever the gracious knowledge and experience we have of His Cross, they are to lead us to the all-important decision of taking up our own and bearing it lifelong. We are to be as He was while in this present world, knowing the self-sacrificing meaning of His words: "as My Father hath sent Me, so send I you." It is not passivity, waiting to see what the world will bring to us. It is a pressing forward in love for mankind with an attitude to man, and a way of life for him like unto His, ever being that, thinking that, and doing that considered as best for the ultimate good and the salvation of others. The bearing of our cross is the way of purposeful and powerful self-sacrifice. That is how He lived. To have the mind of Christ in us is not only to be humble. It is the way of humiliation with a purpose, that being the salvation of others. The difference, of course, between Him and us, and between what He did and what we do is very great. He is Saviour and Master; we are saved sinners and disciples. This difference makes Christianity. But He is the Way for us to Heaven and the Way for us on earth. We are not to be pitied when we take up our cross and follow Him in the way of His Cross. It is the way of His purposes being fulfilled. He saved others but Himself He could not save. He was raised again by the power of God. The fellowship of His sufferings is united to the power

of His Resurrection. So may we dare to be and do as His disciples.

The foolishness of the Cross alone is the way to fulness of life. For anyone to think that there is a way to fulness of life and happiness that by-passes the Cross is to be ignorant of God! The beauty that soon fades, deceiving so many; satisfied appetites, however cultured or debased; luxury and comfort; and pleasure, the death cell!—"the cares, riches and pleasures of this life choke the Word" which is essentially "the preaching of the Cross", calling it foolishness. To a man living in their power it certainly looks so. It is hard to convince such that he is in a living death—death being complete master. Yet only by Jesus is there life and life abundant, and everlasting. They are not in things, however appealing to the better or worse natures of man. And would we be the vehicles of His life and life abundant to others, we must know the forsaking of things; death working so in us but life in others.

The devil, showing the Son of God "the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them", said to Him: "all these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." His was the grand refusal. But He is yet to see the kings of the earth bring the glory and honour of the nations unto that city whose "Builder and Maker is God", and "having the glory of God" (Rev. xxi. 24, 26).

The attitude of the Lord Jesus to things is the only true and right one, and he that forsakes not all that he has cannot be His disciple. How is this to be done? What did Jesus do? He forsook both heavenly and earthly things. "He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

All His things were good yet He forsook them. He did not possess them for possessing's sake. They did not possess Him. He "reckoned it no plunderer's prize to be on an equality with God", not "a thing to be grasped at". Even His possession of the utmost good, the fulness of the Eternal Nature, was dealt with by Him for our Salvation.

While on earth He had a stewardship entrusted to Him: "a body hast Thou prepared Me. . . . Lo, I come to do Thy will O God." Of that stewardship of His life, He said: "No man taketh it from Me; I lay it down of Myself." And He had no evil things to forsake.

But he who would be His disciple has to forsake all evil things that he has, or could have, or what would become evil; then there is the yielding up of the good in so far as it is not in the plan of God for the life to be lived and the service to be done; and then the right and God-guided use of all things committed to one in stewardship. It is not willy-nilly giving away. It is having all things at the disposal of the Lord, in His will, for His good purposeful salvation of souls.

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