

Which Way Are You Headed?

#0591

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 29, 1971

Isn't it a precious privilege for you and me to walk in the light of Jesus?

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD:
His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall
come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain
unto the earth" Hosea 6:3.

We will know "if we follow on to know." God does not do the work of giving Himself instantly, fully, completely, once for all.

"...His going forth is prepared as the morning..." Hosea 6:3.

It's nice to get up in the morning and see the stars shining. As the minutes go by, watch the dawn come, and finally see the sun appearing. It gets brighter and brighter until noon. This is the picture of the Christian life.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" Proverbs 4:18.

As another translation puts it:

"...The light of dawn that shines more and more unto the perfect day" Proverbs 4:18 (unknown version).

Your life and mine is to be gradually increasing. We are to have more light than we had a week ago. But this is dependent upon something on our part.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" John 8:12.

So, our part is to follow. The light is moving on. The reason we have dawn every morning is that the earth is turning toward the sun. If you could run fast enough, you could be in light all the time. That wouldn't be practical, of course, in this life.

Who's our light? Jesus. We're to follow Him. If we follow Him, we'll always be in the light, because He *is* the light. How simple that is.

It's easy to misunderstand and suffer as the result. It's so easy to measure either our own progress or the progress of others by comparing among ourselves. There's a man in Birmingham right now who's nearer to Washington D. C. than we

are. He's in an automobile headed in that direction. It isn't a matter of where we are. It's in what direction we're going.

Am I a Christian?

"Oh, yes, I'm a Christian. I do this and I don't do that."

"There's somebody who doesn't do what I do. He doesn't do some good things that I do. He must be further away than I am."

Not necessarily. The question is not where we are. It's where we're headed. The only way you can tell whether you're making progress in the Christian life is to compare yourself where you were a year ago or a week ago. We should take inventory of ourselves from time to time to see whether we're making progress. I suggest we do that.

"And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" Mark 8:34.

Ordinarily, if we're following somebody, do we need to be close enough to them to see where they're going? That's right. Jesus wants us to keep close to Him. But if we're to follow Him, we're to be carrying something. What? The cross—our cross, my own cross.

What makes the cross? What God wants and what I want are sometimes at cross purposes. That's the cross. Instead of stopping and arguing with God, Jesus tells us to pick up the cross and get going.

"Take the cross and follow Me."

Jesus' disciples had seen many a time a criminal led out to die. They knew that criminal had to carry his cross to the place of execution. Imagine having to drag along the instrument of your own death. That's what Christ is talking about.

He wasn't talking about getting on a parade and singing, "Onward Christian Soldiers," and waving a cross.

He says, "If you're going to follow Me, you need to take your plans, your desires, your ambitions, and carry it out to the place of execution and put all that to death."

That's what it means to follow Him.

Did Jesus take the cross for us? Yes.

So we sing, "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow thee."

But I want you to see a word that brings us back face to face with what we're studying.

"And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"
Luke 9:23.

Here's the "if." If we're going to follow Jesus, we must take up our cross daily.

"I did it yesterday."

That's all right, but there's more ground to cover today. Notice that involved in this is the attitude to deny. The reason many make no more progress in the divine life is that they interpret the will of God to justify what they desire. They have no conflict with self. They have no cross.

The Devil has a lot of people helping him to make us feel that the thing we want to do is something we can get by with and not land in hell. But we're studying about following Jesus. It's a gradual experience. If we want to have fellowship with Him, we're going to learn more and more to feel about things the way He feels about them.

And never forget that Jesus didn't give up everything bad so He could be saved. He gave up everything good so *you* could be saved.

He says, "If you're going to follow Me, deny yourself and take up your cross and come with Me."

More and more as we make progress in the Christian life, we won't be arguing about something and say, "This is so bad that I have to give it up."

Rather, we'll be pressing closer and closer to the bleeding side of Jesus, anxious to make any sacrifice that we may please Him. Not so we can be saved, but that others can be saved.

I was struck with this in the editor's page in the *Review and Herald*, January 28. The title of this editorial is, "The Time for a Truly Christian Lifestyle." Our editor says he has just returned from a busy trip around the world. He was down in the South Sea Islands, in Australia, New Guinea, South Viet Nam, Thailand, and India.

He tells here of the poverty and disease, the strife, the hunger that he saw. Millions and millions of people who are far below what we call the underprivileged here in this country. He says he came back to the United States filled with a new conviction that the people who believe that Jesus has died that men might be saved need to get away from this spending money on self that is so characteristic of this generation.

"As never before we sense that personal Christianity, if it is genuine, will reorient the life, seeking one's interests away from self and toward others. If Jesus practiced self-

denial as He led the way in personal sacrifice, we who take His name must follow His example. We must see that the true purpose of life is ministry. But there is a constant temptation to spend more and more on ourselves. And as the inevitable consequence, less and less on the work of God and the needs of suffering humanity." *Review and Herald*, January 28, 1971, "The Time for a Truly Christian Lifestyle."

So, my question tonight is not what you are doing. My question is which way are you heading? My question is not how your home compares—its furnishings, and simplicity, and economy, and self-denial, and sacrifice with Brother B or Sister A. No, that is not my question. My question is, how is your life as it relates to individual sacrifice? How does it compare with what it was ten years or a year ago? That's the question. This is the whole point of our study. Which way are you headed? What direction are you going?

There is the idea that people are doing the right thing in getting everything more and more comfortable and convenient, getting a constantly higher standard of living. And all the while, half the world goes to bed without knowing what a full meal is. Something is wrong. But as long as people don't get put in jail for murder or stealing, and as long as they conduct themselves as honest citizens, we think these are wonderful people.

"Look how well they're doing. The Lord must be blessing them."

I ask you, which way are you headed? I read the dream about the narrow way that gets steeper and harder and narrower as we get near the end. We must be a long way from that.

People who started out with wagons, finally came to the place where there weren't any wagons or horses. They had to go on foot with bleeding feet. But even wagons seem slow and meager to us today.

If somebody thinks that I want to be strict, I'm not suggesting that we need to get off our comfortable beds and get down and sleep on the floor to show we can take it. But I am asking what percent of your time and money is being spent today on self? I don't mean bad things. I just mean on self.

And remember, you can't look at other people and the things they do. They may not have started at the same point you did. If you see somebody driving a car that's expensive, you don't judge and condemn him. You don't know what kind of car he had before that. God hasn't given you that job. But when *you* go to spend money, that money can mean the salvation of souls.

Somebody says, "I used to think that way, but now everybody thinks the other way."

That's my point. If you measure yourself by what others are doing, you'll miss the blessing of what we're studying tonight.

“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD:
His going forth is prepared as the morning...” Hosea 6:3.

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me...” John 8:12.

Not Hollywood, or Fifth Avenue, but Me.

“...shall have the light of life” John 8:12.

Which way are you going? If you’re going with Jesus and tagging along way behind, which way are you going? Many congratulate themselves on how far behind they are.

The heart of the law of God is the Fourth Commandment:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” Exodus 20:8–11.

Do you love the Sabbath more than you did? Is it becoming increasingly precious to you? Are you more and more careful about guarding the edges of the Sabbath? Or has the Sabbath become more of a holiday than a holy day?

There are trends today that make me alarmed. There are things that people are feeling free to do on God’s holy day that they wouldn’t have thought to do a generation ago in the remnant church. People are making pleasure trips, traveling around on the Sabbath for no other purpose than just to enjoy themselves. Yet it is written:

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” Isaiah 58:13–14.

If we do that, we will find that the Sabbath will be a delight. A family going out and enjoying the things of nature on the Sabbath is one of the most beautiful and enjoyable things about the Sabbath. But that is an entirely different atmosphere than a bunch of people seeing how far and fast they can get. Let us remember that the

purpose of the Sabbath is to enjoy God. As we stop at a tree, listen to the song of a bird, meditate on the beauty of a flower, the message of God through nature gets through to us.

Have you resolutely, by the grace of God, set your face toward Zion? As the world goes deeper and deeper the gulf between you and the world is getting greater and larger.

“God leads His people on step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart... Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation”
Testimonies for the Church, Volume 1, page 187.

The latter rain is not coming upon a people who are lukewarm. The latter rain is not coming upon a people who have been influenced by the fashions and customs of the world, even when they have crept into the church. God is looking for seven thousand who will not bow the knee to Baal. Can you be one? You can be.

“Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, page 81.*

Everybody's taking steps. There's no one who's standing still. You're either closer to heaven tonight than you were a year ago, or further from the Master. We're in a boat. The river is running two miles an hour downstream. No matter if you're rowing one mile an hour upstream, you're being carried down. And if the falls of Niagara are just ahead, it's too bad. Oh, that God may help us to be taking steps every day for Jesus and to enjoy it. It becomes a matter of personal fellowship with God.

It's a wonderful thing when you love somebody so much that the thing you want more than anything else is to know what they want. Then duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure.

“And when He was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me” Mark 10:17, 21.

Some time before this Jesus had talked to Nicodemus, who was richer than this young man. He didn't tell Nicodemus to go home and sell everything he had.

This young man might have said, “Master, what are you picking on me for?”

Only the Master knows when is the right time to let the light shine on you. And don’t worry if He hasn’t bothered somebody else about it. Don’t let that excuse you at all—press in where God is showing the light to you. Put yourself where the light is. This is the way to be happy.

The young man went away sad, for he had great possessions. And notice that the test that Jesus gave him was apparently a test that He wasn’t giving to everybody else. In essence, it was the same test that comes to every soul—the test of full surrender. But on that particular day, the particular point that young man was tested on was the point of covetousness.

Which direction are you moving? Is your life pressing more and more into that narrow way that gets higher and closer to heaven? Jesus is the light. He is at the cross. If you come to the cross and meet Jesus at the point of self-denial, you will find that there is joy in full surrender. Let nothing keep you from the blessing that God wants to give you. Let Jesus have everything in your life.

It’s wonderful to come to the place where you love that and say, “Lord, help me to run the way of Thy commandments. I don’t want to delay.”

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