

Matthew 16:24-28

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Hand-out Mantality

Without doubt, one of the negative by-products of our socially conscientious society is a growing "hand-out" mentality. By this I mean that a growing number of people actually believe that society owes them. The great sacrifices of our forefathers to bring freedom and comfort to our land has created not gratitude but graft. Shared costs for mutual privilege has led to demands for free education, free medication, free accommodation. The needy have been overrun by the greedy. This "give me" approach to life has even entered into the church.

Charles Colson writes: "The roots of the church's identity crisis are found in the consumer mentality so pervasive in our culture... Ask people what they look for in a church and the number one response is "fellowship"... Spiritual consumers are interested not in what the church stands for but in the fulfilment it can deliver."

How far from Christ's call this is: "Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 NIV) Believers can be so far removed from this heartbeat of Christ that understanding of personal denial and a cross escapes them. On January 8, 1956, Jim Elliot and four other missionaries were killed by the Auca natives that they had sought to bring the message of Christ to. Perhaps the words of Elisabeth Elliot regarding her martyred husband will shed some light on denial and a cross: "When I was a student at Wheaton, I asked Jim to autograph my yearbook. He wrote: "The dust of words would smother me. II Timothy 2:4." The text cited says, "No man at war entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier."

His death was the result of simple obedience to his Captain. Many thousands of men have died in obedience to their captains. The men at Gettysburg were among them. Abraham Lincoln's great words, spoken on that battlefield, apply as well to other soldiers whose obedience to commands is not the less to be imitated:

"We cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow -- this ground. The brave men, ... who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. ...It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that ... we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

Lincoln and those who were present at that ceremony viewed once again the ground whereon the men struggled -- common green fields of Pennsylvania, but fraught with new significance. As I read again Jim's own words, put down in battered notebooks during the common routine of life, they become, for me, fraught with new meaning. To them I can add nothing: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." (1949)

God seeks committed Christians not consumer Christians!

What is my response:
