

JOHN 21:18ff.
ROME GEORGIA
November 28, 1993
December 18, 2016

TWO PRINCIPALS FOR ALL BELIEVERS IN THESE VERSES

1 . **Yes, you can serve the Lord in spite of past failures.** There is only one event in the past that determines whether or not we can serve the Lord. That event is not any sin which we have committed or any failure on our part. That past event is the payment for sin offered on our behalf by our SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. *Jn. 21:15 ff.*

2 . **MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!** You do what God has called you to do and allow others to do the same. This is especially true when it comes to ministry. How often churches miss out on God's plan for their fellowship because they are so busy worrying about what others are doing. *Jn. 21. 21-22.*

PETER:

FOLLOW THOU ME! .

MITCHELL BRONK HAD THIS TO SAY REGARDING THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE:

"When I was a school boy we practiced penmanship in copy books. There was a beautifully engraved pattern at the top of every page to guide us, but **each line we wrote became progressively less attractive.** Then the schoolboard purchased new copybooks arranged so that the pattern line could be pushed down the page, always directly before the pupil and covering what he had just written. The improvement in our penmanship was amazing.

(covering - blood of Jesus, covers our past, enables us to live in the present.)

"We thank God for the saints of the past, and for the splendid Christians around us in the world today - for their example and for their inspiration - **but . . .** we should **never loose clear sight of our great Example** who commanded **"FOLLOW THOU ME"** Peter was **looking sideways at John** and **not straight ahead at Jesus.** **It is a fault of Christians even today to mind other believers (business) instead of directing their attention to the savior.**" *DB 3/14/69*

Jesus told Peter **"FOLLOW ME"** - not **"FOLLOW JOHN"**

. "Oh goody" Peter must have thought. "Now I get to live up to my boast about dying with Jesus!"

Matt. 26:35 Peter said unto him, **Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.** Likewise also said **all the disciples.**

Peter probably was willing to die for Jesus. But, **we are all willing to do things that we will never have to do**. And in the event that we are faced with doing some of these things, **THOUGH WE ARE WILLING - YET IS OUR FLESH WEAK like that of Peter**. But **also like Peter - JESUS DOES NOT GIVE UP ON US**. We can grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When Peter turned to look at John, HE DIVERTED HIS EYES FROM JESUS!

He failed again - yet Jesus again says FOLLOW ME!

One **pitfall** in the Christian life is that which Peter here so aptly demonstrates for us. That is, **the tendency we have to look around at others to see if they are walking as we walk rather than looking at Jesus to see if we are walking as He would have us walk!**

It can be disheartening to see other believers walk as though Jesus were the last thing on their mind. Our walk takes us through the dark shadows of suffering and depravation while they skip along in the sunshine of ignorance, blissfully bereft of any compunction or any apparent desire to allow Jesus to direct the affairs of their lives. I really think that this is one reason so many factions of Christians down through the ages have veered off into **legalism**. That is, this matter of saying "**as long as you walk as a Christian you are one**," but if you sin, even in a small detail, you loose your salvation! What THEY have done is to TAKE THEIR EYES OFF JESUS and fix them on others and THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAW.

Dwelling on the carefree life-style of others will do nothing to alleviate the sufferings that we may have to endure for our Savior. Keeping our eyes on Jesus will enable us to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ Jesus". **This does not mean that we will ENJOY SUFFERING!**

JESUS DID NOT ENJOY CALVARY.

HEB. 12:2 CONFIRMS THIS WHEN IT PROCLAIMS:THAT **JESUS** "**ENDURED**" THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM.

AS BELIEVERS, WE COUNT IT A PRIVILEGE TO SHARE IN SUFFERING WITH CHRIST, FOR **WE KNOW THAT IF WE SUFFER WITH HIM WILL SHALL ALSO REIGN WITH HIM.**

ROM. 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; **if so be that we suffer with *him***, that we may be also glorified together.

II Tim. 2:12 – If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

As believers, we do not enjoy the thought of dying - BUT, neither are we fearful of it. But, we also all hope that we shall live until Christ shall call all the saints out of this wicked world. We want to be able to proclaim –

I Cor. 15:51-55 "O death where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory!

We greatly desire to hear that trumpet sound in the day that those who are alive shall be caught up in the clouds in a twinkling of an eye, so ever to live with the Lord.

I THES. 4:13

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that **we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.**

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore **comfort one another with these words.**

Simon, son of Jonas, "**LOVEST THOU ME**" then prepare to lay down your life!

I John 4:18 "there is no fear in love - but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

PETER - DO YOU LOVE ME? FOLLOW ME!

THERE IS A COST ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHRISTIAN LIFE - AND THE COST IS NOT THE SAME FOR ALL.

(**Air fares** on the airlines. Not everybody will pay the same on the same flight. All are going to Atlanta - but not all have paid the same fare.)

Laborers in the Vineyard

MATT. 20:15 is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Which is essentially what Jesus said to Peter in

John 21:22 - " IF I WILL THAT HE TARRY TILL I COME, WHAT IS THAT TO THEE. FOLLOW THOU ME.?"

PETER WAS NOT THE FIRST NOR THE LAST TO DWELL ON OTHERS RATHER THAN JESUS - **ELIJAH** HAD AN INTERESTING TWIST ON THIS SAME PROBLEM WHEN HE LOOKED AROUND AND SO NO OTHERS TO COMPARE HIMSELF TO!

The cry of the Prophet Elijah - **1 Kings 19:9-10 and 18** (I, even I only am left to serve thee.)

1 Kings 19:9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

God's Assurance to Elijah

1 Kings 19:18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

We are not expected to understand all things during our sojourn on this earth. **But we must understand one thing without fail - follow God!** "but - there is so much that I want to know, and I want to know it **now**" So much eschatology - so much ecclesiology.

WE WOULD DO WELL TO HEED THE ADVICE GOD GAVE DANIEL REGARDING THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS PERTAINING TO THE OUTWORKING OF GOD'S PLAN.

Daniel 12:8,9,13

Dan 12:8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?

Dan 12:9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: **for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.**

Dan 12:13 But **go thou thy way till the end be:** for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

PETER, ELIJAH, MEMBER OF GRACE BIBLE CHURCH - WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?

AND HE SAYS TO **ALL OF US** - **MATT. 11:28-30** "COME UNTO ME ALL YE THAT LABOR . . . "

DO SO WITHOUT LOOKING BACK - FOR HE THAT PUTTETH HIS HAND TO THE PLOUGH AND LOOKETH BACK - IS NOT FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

A.W. Tozier

"Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of my fellow servants. They have congregations larger than mine. So be it. I rejoice in their success. They have greater gifts than I. Very well. **That is not in their power nor in mine.** I am grateful for their larger gifts and my smaller ones.

I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such modest gifts as I possess. I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel

one or another in Thy holy work. I herewith make a blanket disavowal of all intrinsic worth. I am but an unprofitable servant. I gladly go to the foot of the class and own myself the least of Thy people. If I err in my self-judgment and actually underestimate myself I do not want to know it. I purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed it is my own if it is Thine own, for what is Thine is mine, and while one plants and another waters it is Thou alone that giveth the increase. (*see Tozer article attached.*)

(DACHAU POW CAMP AND THE IMPRISONED GERMAN PROTESTANT PREACHERS IN WWII. AFTER THE WAR THERE WAS A PRAYER RETREAT AT WHICH THERE WAS A TEARFUL RECONCILIATION WITH THOSE PASTORS WHO WENT ALONG WITH THE THIRD REICH DURING THE REIGN OF HITLER.)

No Competition ~ A.W. Tozer

It is inherent in the nature of the religion of Christ that it cannot be promoted by competitive acts.

The **essence of Christianity is selfless love**. This was expressed first by our Lord in His redemptive suffering and has been expressed again and again since in every artless deed of kindness done by His followers for each other and for a suffering world. The essence of competition is self-love. Men compete to gain something for themselves, and in doing so they must of necessity cause someone else to lose what they gain. From this we gather that the two spirits are opposed to each other. **We cannot be selfish and selfless at the same time.**

Nothing spiritual can be gained in competition. The very idea of struggling with another for some eternal treasure of the soul is unthinkable. John D. Rockefeller used to enjoy throwing a handful of shiny new dimes to a crowd of children and watching them scramble after them, each one struggling to grab as many as possible. The gifts and graces of God are not thus obtained. **Each one of God's children can have all of Him and no one need receive less because another receives an abundance.**

When two men step into a prize ring they know that only one can win, and whoever wins can do so only by forcing the other to lose. When five men line up on the track for a race they know that only one can come in first. Four men must lose that one may win. **It is not so in the kingdom of God. Christians** do not run against each other. **All can win the race. Paul likens a Christian to a fighter, but the Christian's fight is not with other Christians.** Each one can win and no one need lose. **The man of faith fights against the devil, the flesh and the world. He wins as they lose; but he never wins anything truly spiritual in competition with a fellow believer.** In the nature of things he cannot. To think so is to entertain an absurdity.

Whatever religious activity is, or even can be, promoted in a spirit of competition is of the flesh and must perish with the flesh; in the day of Christ nothing will remain but self-reproach and disappointment. Yet there are forms of religious promotion that lend themselves to selfish uses. The earthly scaffoldings of the Christian faith are often constructed from motives no higher than jealousy and personal ambition. The eternal part is above the reach of carnal men; the temporal elements are subject to the manipulations of ambitious leaders who seek glory for themselves. And verily they have their reward.

Circumstances being what they are the Christian minister is the one most tempted to carry on competitive religious activity. Even where his self-respect and good taste will not allow him to engage in an obvious race for numbers or publicity or fame he may yet harbor the spirit of envy within his heart and so be as guilty as the coarser and less inhibited bellwether who openly seeks to excel. He can get deliverance from the spirit of religious rivalry by going straight to God and having an understanding about the whole thing. **Let him humble himself in the presence of God and in all earnestness pray somewhat like this:**

Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of Thy servants. They have congregations larger than mine. So be it. I rejoice in their success. They have greater gifts. Very well. That is not in their power nor in mine. I am humbly grateful for their greater gifts and my smaller ones. I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such modest gifts as I possess. I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel one or another in Thy holy work. I herewith make a blanket disavowal of all intrinsic worth. I am but an unprofitable servant. I gladly go to the foot of the class and own myself the least of Thy people. If I err in my self-judgment and actually underestimate myself I do not want to know it. I purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed it is my own if it is Thine own, for what is Thine is mine, and while one plants and another waters it is Thou alone that giveth the increase.

The man who walks according to the spirit of this prayer will find himself free from all envy and all rivalry and will be at liberty to serve God in the simplicity and power of the Holy Ghost. Such a man will build with gold and silver and precious stones and will escape the tragedy of discovering too late that he has built of wood, hay and stubble.