

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXVII

October 29, 2017

No. 44

Faithful Follower

(Jerry Fite)

A rich young ruler, wanting to know what good thing to do to inherit eternal life, turned from following Jesus because keeping his present possessions was more important. Following Jesus demands we value Him above all, and submit to His commands. On the surface, eternal life sounds like the ultimate possession, but when we dig deeper into the soul, we find lesser things in control.

Jesus pointed the way to eternal life: “*keep the commandments*” (Matthew 19:17). The young ruler had been doing so consistently from his youth. Apparently, one can avoid taking innocent life, restrain the body from adultery and theft, honor one’s parents, and love one’s neighbor as one’s self without giving up earthly possessions. The necessity of following the Lord with the whole heart, demanded Jesus probe deeper into this young man’s heart. Jesus said, “*If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me*” (Matthew 19:22). The man’s sorrowful departure manifested what was more important: earthly possessions, not following Jesus by

helping the poor with abundance, and having treasure of eternal life.

When we first heed the call to follow Jesus, the Lord does not command us to separate ourselves from earthly possessions. But would we continue to follow Jesus if in time we needed to sell any of our possessions to take care of the desperate need of our brethren? Barnabas and other followers of Jesus did, when such need arose in their walk with the Lord (Acts 2:45, 4: 37). Ananias and Sapphira wanted to appear equally as generous, but kept back part of the proceeds from the sale of their land, and lied to cover their covetous hearts from the eyes of their brethren (Acts 5).

Would we continue to be a faithful follower of Jesus if we have all our possessions confiscated by authorities opposed to Christianity? Early Christians did. They continued their faithful walk with the Lord, because they truly believed they had an abiding treasure in heaven. Such inward confidence radiated with joy that only a follower full of faith could understand (Hebrews 10:34).

Peter responded to Jesus’ reaction to the rich young ruler blinded by worldly possessions,

saying, “*Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have*” (Matthew 19:27). Jesus drove home a warning to Peter about following the Lord in the parable of the calling of laborers to work in the vineyard.

A householder went out the third hour of the day, the sixth, the ninth and the last hour calling for laborers to work in his vineyard. All agreed to work for the wage of a shilling a day. With the parable, Jesus is warning the heart of the follower, like Peter’s, that since he left all to follow Jesus, then he should receive more than those who have not given up as much, or served as long. As the householder rewards faithful service, so the Lord places emphasis on being faithful when we are called by the gospel to follow Jesus, whether it be the third or eleventh hour.

There will probably be those who heed the invitation to follow Jesus shortly before His appearing to take the faithful to Heaven. If they are following Jesus at the end of time, they will be rewarded with Heaven, just as those of the first century, or our own century. It is not about how much, or how long, but how faithful is your walk with the Lord.