

will for our lives. Jesus is a very good example in this. He gave up the glories of His heavenly home to do His Father's will. John 3:16 says, "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." Jesus was willing to do what His Father wanted. We must be willing to forsake everything we have to follow Him.

As we live in our communities as Christians, our neighbors may make fun of us because our lives are different from theirs. We *are* different, and our holy lives may condemn them. There are many ways that people can mistreat us because we are Christians. We must return good for evil and not resist them. Jesus said in His sermon on the mountain, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5: 44, 45). We are not to fight back but must be willing to suffer for Jesus' sake.

Not all Christians are persecuted. But as we live, we must be willing to take what comes if we are mistreated because we are Christians. The Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1 tells us to offer our bodies to God as a living sacrifice because of what He has done for us. We may not be called to suffer as Christians, but we must be willing to suffer if that call comes. But this offering our bodies as a sacrifice is not only bodily suffering but a giving of our souls to God as well. By offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, we show God that we are avoiding sin and using our souls and bodies in His service.

How do we give our bodies as a living sacrifice? We do this by allowing Jesus to rule our lives by the Holy Spirit. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

As a living sacrifice our bodies must not be used for sinning, but must be set apart for God and put to right and holy uses. Giving ourselves over completely to God makes our lives acceptable to Him. This means a *complete* giving over of the control of our lives to God. This is only possible because of what Jesus has done for us.

After we have given all to God, we cannot follow our own natural desires. We must follow God's will for us. Our appetite may tell us, "I want this; it is good," and our conscience then answers, "It is wrong." We must follow our conscience and reject the appetite. In Luke 9: 23 Jesus says we must do this daily, or all the time. We can do this only by wanting to please Jesus and to be more and more like Him. The natural life we live tries to draw us from making the sacrifice.

When we are content with all our wants and needs satisfied in a physical way, we may lose our sense of need for Jesus. Therefore, if we want to have as our life's purpose this *earthly* life with all of its treasures and pleasures, we will lose the true life—the life that Jesus gives.

Jesus' disciples, following His example, did not hold back from giving up their lives for their beliefs. All Christians must have the martyr spirit in them. We must be willing, if need be, to lose all earthly things, even our lives, for His sake. Jesus gave Himself for us, and He asks for our whole selves in return. We must not keep anything back from Him.

If we shrink from suffering for Jesus and from fully committing ourselves to Him, nothing earthly or physical can take the place of the loss of our Christian life and the eternal rewards it offers. Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). No man can own the whole world. But if he could, it would weigh nothing in comparison to the value of his life.

The Apostle John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17).

All that a person acquires of an earthly character belongs only to his body. When he dies, everything he has stays here on the earth. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (I Timothy 6:7). Earth's treasures are short lasting. But we as Christians have a "blessed hope" knowing what is ahead for us. Titus 2:13 says we may have many earthly possessions, but our spiritual possessions are so much greater and no one can take them away.

A rich man may appear to have all that the world offers. But what does he have if he loses the true life, the Christian life? Remember, we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out. When we die, we leave all earthly possessions behind. Worldly riches and power cannot buy spiritual wealth. Spiritual wealth comes by sacrificing everything we have and then receiving Jesus' provisions for us.

One day Jesus was in the Temple in Jerusalem watching people giving their gifts. He saw rich people giving their large gifts. A poor widow came by and put in a small amount, possibly less than a penny. Jesus said that she had given more than all of the rest put together. Why did He say this? He said the rich people had given a small amount of what they didn't need. The poor widow had given all she had to live on. This is what Jesus wants from us. He wants all we have to be used for Him. We are not judged as much by what we give, as by what we keep and what our attitude is about that.