

“WHAT SHALL WE HAVE THEREFORE?”

One of the saddest accounts in all of the Bible has to be Jesus' discussion with the rich young ruler (Matt.19:16-22). Here was a morally upright, spiritually-minded young man with a very bright future. He was focused on life beyond this life. But alas, there was one thing which stood in his way of obtaining eternal life—his attachment to material possessions. He was unwilling to part with the things which he accumulated. Hearing this discussion take place, the disciples of Jesus began to wonder just what was in store for them, seeing they had done what this rich, young ruler was unwilling to do. Peter no doubt vocalizes what all of the disciples were thinking when he asked, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” (vs.27). The disciples were anticipating some great temporal blessing for their willingness to follow Jesus. Their minds were fixed on the material, but Jesus turned their attention to the eternal (vs.29).

It is sad indeed that many manifest the same mindset toward serving Christ as did the disciples. There are multitudes following Jesus today strictly for the “loaves and fishes” (John 6:26). Many look for a church that will meet their needs. They want to know what the church has to offer them, rather than seeing what they can offer the church. Erect a building, put in a gymnasium, a band, and a few things here and there to give the appearance of a “church,” and you can fill it up with masses who are transfixed with material things. Start proclaiming the truth of God's word, and refuse to compromise when pressed, and many will go away, unable to bear it (John 6:66-67). Myriads are under the impression that the Lord “owes” them something for the least bit of sacrifice or devotion to his cause. If we show up for services, then we have made some great sacrifice—“What shall we have therefore?” If we cast into the treasury some token out of our abundance—“What shall we have therefore?” Oh the disappointment and despair that will befall all of those who have followed Jesus for the wrong reasons.

As children of God, we must make sure that our hearts are in the right place. We must maintain a proper focus: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth” (Col.3:1-2). Successful Christian living involves a far different mindset than those in the world possess. We need the courage and conviction to live transformed lives, not conformed ones (Rom.12:1-2). Following Jesus only for temporal blessings means that we are merely laying up for ourselves treasures upon earth, which treasures perish by reason of time (Matt.6:19-20). Our hearts must be anchored in heaven (Heb.6:19), and our eyes must be firmly fixed on the prize before us (Phil.3:14). That which we truly treasure will capture our affections (Matt.6:21). If we serve the Master faithfully, he will take care of us during our earthly sojourn, and welcome us into the hallowed bliss of that bright, eternal day. We need never fear that the sacrifices we make for the cause of Christ will go unnoticed (1 Cor.15:58). May we ever remember that

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name” (Heb.6:10). Faithful Christian, here is your promise of reward: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev.2:10).

Patrick Morrison