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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

"THIS ONE THING I DO"

C. D. Cole

Philippians 3:13, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."

INTRODUCTION: Paul is here giving us his philosophy of life. He is letting us into the secret of his life and telling us what made him the kind of Christian he was. He tells us how his life was lived in relation to the past, present, and future. As to the past, there was a wise forgetfulness--forgetting the things which are behind; as to the future there was wise anticipation--reaching forth unto those things which are before; and in the present there was strenuous concentration. And these are things that make for success in any field of human endeavor.

There are two distinct but parallel truths that every Christian needs to be established in: the sovereignty of God including his eternal purpose in grace; the other is human responsibility involving repentance and faith and good works. The denial of either of these

will inevitably lead to spiritual paralysis and death of Christians.

Hardshellism denies human responsibility in matters of repentance, faith and good works. It has resulted in missionary paralysis and death of Christians. Arminianism denies divine sovereignty and distinguishing grace in salvation which will produce the same results unless interest is kept up through fear or love of human reward.

If you want interest in spiritual things that will survive the test of time and will not be dependent on human rewards and slavish fear, then find a people who have conviction on the truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Man is a responsible creature--he is responsible to love and trust Christ and obey Him--responsible to do everything that God commands any man to do; but he is also a depraved creature, an enemy to God, ignorant of the things of God, so that the gospel is hid to him even when preached by a Paul. He ought to do everything that is right but he can do nothing right apart from the grace of God.

Paul certainly had these convictions and they explain his humility before God and his untiring labors for human salvation.

It needs to be remembered that men become good Christians in the same way they become good doctors, good mechanics, or ripe scholars and this is by a strenuous concentration to the task of their profession. But the mystery is that though people know well enough they cannot be good carpenters or doctors, or nurses, or musicians without certain habits and practices, they seem to think they can be good Christians without any effort and without any sense of responsibility. Nobody can be a good Christian by drifting, by following the line of least resistance. And on the other hand, nobody can be a good Christian in his own strength. Our text suggests how one may be a good Christian.

I. MAKE GOD'S AIM YOUR AIM. God had an aim or purpose in your conversion. Discover that aim and make it yours. That aim was perfection--a Christ-like and God-pleasing character. He began a good work in you for the

purpose of ultimately making you like His Son. Is that your goal--are you trying to be like Christ? With Paul it was not an attainment to boast of, but a goal to be striven for. He says that he had not yet attained perfection, but was pressing on, "if that I may lay hold of that for which also I am laid hold of by Christ Jesus."

God's providence in our lives is to contribute towards perfection. For this all the discipline of life is set in motion. For this, sorrows and joys are experienced. For this, hopes and fears and loves are kindled. For this, we have been redeemed. For this, Christ lived and suffered and died. God means to make us like Himself, that is, to bring us into conformity with His will as manifested in His Son; and so all his dealings with us are to ultimately make us like Christ.

To see and accept this will give nobleness and blessedness to our lives. How different all our estimates of events would be if we kept before us that their purpose was not merely to make us happy and glad, or to make us sorrowful and sad, but to make us Christ-like. If we could look beyond our sorrows to the end for which they are sent, we would not so often say, Why has this trouble come upon me? All the experiences of the Christian are to contribute towards future perfection and eternal glory. Look at Romans 8:28 in the light of this statement. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Some plants need frost to bring out their flavor, and so Christians need sorrow and trouble to develop in them Christian graces and

virtue. Romans 5:3, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

To make God's aim our aim will save us from prostitution of powers. The prostitution of human powers to unworthy and ignoble aims is the saddest thing about humanity. For example, Hitler's rule of Germany. Paul pressed forward in his struggle for perfection. What are you striving for?

Plenty of us can say we press on but for what? Some press on in a record of crime; others for wealth, fame, position, health, or education.

Changing the figure slightly, there is one mark and every arrow that does not hit that target is wasted.

II. CONCENTRATION OF ALL EFFORT ON THIS ONE AIM. "This one thing I do." Paul concentrated on one thing--he concentrated on perfection.

All legitimate occupations in life are consistent with this one aim. If you are engaged in any kind of business inconsistent with the struggle for holiness, you had better give it up.

It isn't easy to make progress in the Christian life. There must be concentration of all our powers. There must be point and aim to our lives. If you want to bore a hole you take a sharp point not a dull one. Concentration of effort toward holiness will give point and aim to our lives. The conquering word is "This one thing I do."

The difference between the amateur and the professional is that the amateur pursues a thing at intervals--he takes time off for other occupations, to do it; while the professional makes it his life's business.

III. Pursue this end with a wise forgetfulness. "Forgetting the things which are behind." Paul is thinking of the runner, who has no time to look over his shoulder to mark the steps he has already taken. Paul does not mean that we are to forget God's past mercies and so fail to render him thanks. He does not mean that we are to forget our failures so that we will not profit from them. He means that we are to forget our failures in so far as they might make us feel that future success is impossible. We must not say, "I have tried so often and failed, there is no use trying anymore. I am beaten and I quit." A wise forgetfulness is to forget past sorrows, past failures, past joys, past achievements in so far as these might act as a weight in running the Christian race and pressing toward perfection.

IV. PURSUE THIS AIM WITH A WISE, EAGER REACHING FORWARD. The word here for reaching forth is a very graphic word. It means "reaching out over." It gives us the picture of the runner with his whole body thrown forward, his hand extended, and his eyes reaching farther than his hand, in his eagerness for the mark and the prize.

Suppose we made the effort to please God that we do to please our friend. Suppose we gave the time and effort to a godly life that we give to making money or seeking pleasure or achieving fame. What a difference there would be in our lives.

V. PURSUE THIS AIM LAWFULLY. Paul says in II Timothy 2:5, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." There is a rule book for the Christian

racer; a manual of arms for the Christian soldier, a handbook for the Christian workman. The rule book is the Bible. It tells what to do, how to do it, and why to do it.

We are to look in the rule book to see what we are to do: We are to do all things commanded. Let us mention some of them: baptism; supporting church with presence, prayers, and means; provide things honest in the sight of all men; abstain from worldliness; friendship with the world is enmity with God; do good to all men especially to the household of faith; be in subjection to the powers that be; send the gospel to all men.

We are to do these things from love and for the glory of God. Not to be done for human praise, nor to please self. Not to let the left hand know what the right hand does, means that we must not take pride in any good thing we do--we must not praise ourselves, we must do it for his praise and glory.

CONCLUSION: This life is only for the Christian--the man who has taken the place of a sinner and is hoping in Jesus Christ. It begins in repentance and faith and is carried on by building up ourselves in our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in the love of God, and looking for mercy. Jude, verses 20 and 21 say, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

PURIFYING FIRES

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." Psalm 136:1

In the 1600's, London was a poorly designed city of wooden buildings and narrow lanes. The living conditions were often unsanitary, making disease common. Between 1603 and 1665, over 150,000 people died from bubonic plague. Then, in 1666, another seeming disaster occurred. The city was swept by a fire which burned uncontrollably for several days. Most of the city was destroyed, including the filthy areas where disease had festered. As the city was rebuilt, stone buildings were constructed and the streets were widened. The New London, designed in a Renaissance style, became one of the most beautiful capital cities in Europe. The Great Fire destroyed the rampant plague and prepared the way for a more magnificent London!

Sometimes the Lord sends into our lives purifying fires which we do not understand. He may be ridding us of some spiritual disease or clearing out the wooden shacks to make room for works of great splendor. After Job went through the purifying fire, God doubled his possessions. There is bound to be blessing in the purging of the fire!

Lord, Help us to trust You "in faith believing" that You order our lives and know what's best for us--even the trial that we may face today.

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RULES FOR DAILY LIFE

- BEGIN THE DAY WITH GOD.
Kneel down to Him in prayer;
Lift up thy heart to His abode,
And seek His love to share.
- OPEN THE BOOK OF GOD,
And read a portion there;
That it may hallow all thy thoughts
And sweeten all thy care
- GO THROUGH THE DAY WITH GOD.
Whate'er thy work may be
Where'er thou art -- at home, abroad,
He still is near to thee.
- CONVERSE IN MIND WITH GOD,
Thy spirit heavenward raise
Acknowledge every good bestowed,
And offer grateful praise.
- CONCLUDE THE DAY WITH GOD,
Thy sins to Him confess;
Trust in the Lord's atoning blood,
And plead His righteousness.
- LIE DOWN AT NIGHT WITH GOD,
Who gives his servants sleep;
And when thou tread'st the vale of death,
He will thee guard and keep.
- Author unknown -



THE CHURCH IS GOD'S HOLY CREATION



It is the divinely appointed place where God meets His people.

DON'T NEGLECT REGULAR ATTENDANCE

SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF BIBLE DOCTRINE (PORTUGUESE EDITION)

BY: T. P. SIMMONS

The Bryan Station Baptist Church may be able to put this edition back in print, if we can obtain an original copy. There have been Portuguese copies in the past. If you have one and would let us use it to photograph it, please contact us at: Bryan Station Baptist Church, 3175 Briar Hill Road, Lexington, Kentucky 40516. After photographing it, it will be returned to you.

Jesus Christ is Lord