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The Race and the Crown



Part 19 (011104PM)

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What does Heaven have to do with us on earth? It is to be our focus, our orientation, our hope. One of the greatest places we see this is in Hebrews 11. Before we read these verses that remind us of how we live our lives on earth, we need to get ready. To prepare your mind and heart for what we really need to consider, please quietly and deliberately sing or say these words with me this morning:

This world is not my home

I'm just a passing through

My treasures are laid up

Somewhere beyond the blue

The angels beckon me

From heaven's open door

And I can't feel at home

In this world anymore.

This morning we saw three terrible dangers that can rob anyone of finishing well and earning Christ's well done. These three areas should concern all of us who seek Christ's full rewards in Heaven. He says:

- Beware of the sins of old age:** lust for comfort and convenience, greed for recognition and covetousness for security. The sins of old age can erase Christ's well done. Remember Solomon.
- Beware of the problem of exceptionism,** which make me think my life is an exception to God's Word. Thus I can excuse myself from doing anything for Heaven because of my past, or my pain, or my poverty, or my poor self-image. The problem of exceptionism can erase Christ's well done. Remember Annanias and Saphira.
- Beware of the unmortified pockets of pride.** Allowing these pockets to grow and not be dealt with can make me proud of my intellect, or proud of my achievements, or proud of my giftedness, or even proud of my goodness. Pockets of pride in my life can erase Christ's well done. Remember Lot.

Lesson one, is there is only one thing you want to hear one second after you die? Have you started to dream about winning the ultimate prize, which is hearing Christ's words "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Master's Home!"

- [Matthew 25:14-30.](#) Jesus asks us to DREAM ABOUT WINNING THE ULTIMATE PRIZE! "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"

Lesson number one: **DREAM ABOUT WINNING CHRIST'S WELL DONE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT AS THE ULTIMATE PRIZE OF ALL OF LIFE.** [Matthew 25:21, 23](#)

Lesson number two: the second key to Christ's well done is those who **SEEK TO BE THE GREATEST CHRISTLIKE SERVANT.** [Matthew 20:20-28](#)

William Barclay ^[1] has succinctly commented,

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- Part: 4 [Jesus: I AM the Bread of Life](#)
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- Part: 2 [Jesus: I AM the Light to follow](#)
- Part: 1 [Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust](#)

"Out in the world, said Jesus, it is quite true that the great man is the man who controls others; the man to whose word of command others must leap; the man who with a wave of his hand can have his slightest need supplied.

Out in the world there was the Roman governor with his retinue and the eastern potentate with his slaves. The world counts them great.

But among my followers service alone is the badge of greatness. Greatness does not consist in commanding others to do things for you; it consists in doing things for others; and the greater the service, the greater the honor. Jesus uses a kind of gradation. "If you wish to be *great*," he says, "be a *servant*; if you wish to be *first of all* be a *slave*." Here is the Christian revolution: here is the complete reversal of all the world's standards. A complete new set of values has been brought into life.

Cecil Northcott in *Famous Life Decisions* tells that when the great Japanese saint Toyohiko Kagawa first came into contact with Christianity, he felt its fascination, until one day the cry burst from him: "O God, make me like Christ."

To be like Christ he went to live in the slums, even though he himself was suffering from tuberculosis. It seemed the last place on earth to which a man in his condition should have gone. He went to live in a six foot by six hut in a Tokyo slum.

On his first night he was asked to share his bed with a man suffering from contagious itch. That was a test of his faith. Would he go back on his point of no return? No. He welcomed his bed-fellow. Then a beggar asked for his shirt and got it. Next day he was back for Kagawa's coat and trousers, and got them too. Kagawa was left standing in a ragged old kimono.

The slum dwellers of Tokyo laughed at him, but they came to respect him. He stood in the driving rain to preach, coughing all the time. "God is love," he shouted. "God is love. Where love is, there is God." He often fell down exhausted, and the rough men of the slums carried him gently back to his hut. Kagawa himself wrote: "God dwells among the lowliest of men. He sits on the dust heap among the prison convicts. He stands with the juvenile delinquents. He is there with the beggars. He is among the sick, he stands with the unemployed. Therefore let him who would meet God visit the prison cell before going to the temple. Before he goes to Church let him visit the hospital. Before he reads his Bible let him help the beggar."

Therein is greatness. The world may assess a man's greatness by the number of people whom he controls and who are at his beck and call; or by his intellectual standing and his academic eminence; or by the number of committees of which he is a member; or by the size of his bank balance and the material possessions which he has amassed; but in the assessment of Jesus Christ these things are irrelevant. His assessment is quite simply—how many people has he helped?

For **lesson number three** turn back to [Luke 21:1-4](#) with me as we continue to listen to Jesus speak about the 3rd key to Christ's well done. **JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US Loving To Sacrifice FOR HIM through OUR Financial Generosity** [Luke 21:1-4](#) And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all: 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had." This is what Christ's words in [Matthew 6:19-21](#) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The key is NOW. Don't wait, be sure while you have something you can sacrifice, you sacrifice it! May I remind you we live in uncertain times? Let me quote from history and warn you that a day may lie ahead when YOUR ^[2] DOLLARS DIE:

"Germany

lay in ruins. Millions of refugees wandered the streets in German cities amid the rubble of bombed-out buildings and disheveled streets. Years would be necessary to rebuild. The memory of Adolph Hitler would never be forgotten. Willard Cantelon, in his book *The Day the Dollar Dies*, recounts the story of a little German mother who wanted to assist the building of a Bible school on the outskirts of the destroyed city of Frankfurt. She held her money with pride and tenderness, as though it was a part of her very life. She had earned this money with hard work and had constantly guarded it in the war's destructive years. Now "she was investing it in a worthy cause and beamed with pride as she offered her contribution". "

"Cantelon continues, "How could I tell her she had held this money too long? Why did it fall my lot to shock this sensitive soul with the news that her money was virtually worthless? Why had she not read the morning paper, or heard the announcement that the new government in Bonn had cancelled this currency?" That Sunday in June of 1948, a staggering number of Germans committed suicide. Millions lost their savings because the mark had been canceled by their government. If only they had exchanged their money for something that would survive the economic collapse! If this dear lady-bless her-had brought her money sooner, those marks could have helped pay for the renovation of the facilities or the tuition of students. Too bad that she had to hear those disappointing words, "Madam, I'm awfully sorry, but I cannot accept your money. "

Someday, every dollar, every piece of gold, and every jewel will be devalued, wiped out forever. Peter wrote: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" ([2 Peter 3:10](#)).

"So much for Wall Street. Good-bye to stocks, bonds, property, and gold. Good-bye to houses, condos, and cars. The wise investor will put his money in a place that will bring the greatest dividends for the longest time. We cannot take dollars and

Krugerrands with us unless we transmute them into something that will bridge the gap between earth and heaven. On a wall in a New York rescue mission there are these lines:

Angels from their realms on High

Look down on us with wondrous eye

That where we are but passing guests

We build such strong and solid nests

But where we hope to dwell for aye

We scarce take heed one stone to lay."

Lesson number four is that **JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US Loving Trials AS WE Joyfully Accept Injustice** [Matthew 5:11-12](#) "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your **reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 1 [Peter 2:19](#) For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

Lesson number five is that **JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US Loving Strangers through OUR PRACTICE OF Biblical Hospitality** [Matthew 10:40-41](#) "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. [Matthew 18:5](#) Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

- [Matthew 25:40-45](#) And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**' 44 'Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.**'

Remember the insight I gave you from an outsider looking at the early ^[3] church by the name of Aristedes? This is his note to the Emperor Hadrian in AD 155: *Now the Christians, O King... if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessities, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food. For Christ's sake they are ready to lay down their lives.*

6th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US Loving to restrain our flesh by seeking the Spiritual Disciplines. *We are rewarded by the person whose praise we seek; prayer, fasting, scripture memory and so on.* [Matthew 6:5](#) "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

We have reared ^[4] a generation of strong-willed, belligerent, independent young men and women. Surrender is not a word in their vocabulary. Too bad, since it is the key that unlocks the vault of God's best and deepest treasures. He patiently waits for us to yield, to quit fighting Him, to allow His plan to run its course, to turn to Him for our security and significance. As He witnesses our doing that, he begins to reveal Himself and His will in greater depth. **The Decision** ^[5] to reorder one's private world, **Is The Spiritual Discipline of simplicity.** **The Decision** to be still, **Is The Spiritual Discipline of silence.** **The Decision** to cultivate serenity, **Is The Spiritual Discipline of solitude.** **The Decision** to trust the Lord completely, **Is The Spiritual Discipline of surrender.**

7th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US Loving our lot in life through Faithfulness in Our Vocation. Put ^[6] yourself in a time machine and go back two thousand years and imagine that you are one of the 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. You have no rights, no chance for a promotion, no court of appeals. To such, Paul wrote that they should serve their masters and they would serve Christ

- [Colossians 3:22-24](#) Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.
- [Philippians 2:8-9](#) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
- 1 [Peter 5:6](#) Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,

8th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US LOVING THE HARD TO LOVE LIKE HE DID. [Luke 6:27-28](#) "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

9th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US LOVING GOD'S TRUTH SO MUCH WE ARE FILLED WITH HIS WORD. 2 John 1 To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

[Colossians 3:16](#) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and

admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

10th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US LOVING WHAT JESUS LEFT US TO DO ENOUGH TO TAKE PEOPLE WITH US TO HEAVEN. [1 Thessalonians 2: 19](#) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? [1 Corinthians 3: 6-8](#) I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

11th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US LOVING JESUS SO MUCH WE WATCH FOR HIS RETURN EACH DAY. I don't know what all of you have as a hobby, but I must confess mine. I love to try to find clues about Christ's coming from God's Word each day and then by observing the world around me. I have Christ's return as my hobby. I love to work on this hobby by reading, listening, traveling and anything else that helps me think of how He is coming anytime soon! What was it Jesus asked us as His servants to do? Remember [Luke 12: 35-38](#) "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, **blessed are those servants.** [2 Timothy 4: 8](#) Finally, there is laid up for me **the crown** of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also **to all who have loved His appearing.**

12th JESUS SAYS WELL DONE WHEN HE SEES US LOVING JESUS SO MUCH THAT WHEN HE LEADS ME THROUGH FURTHER REFINEMENT I SEE IT AS A BLESSING! [1 Peter 1: 7](#) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, [Hebrews 6: 10](#) For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

[1] Quoted from Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew - Volume 2 Chapters 11-28 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

[2] Willard Cantelon, *The Day the Dollar Dies: Biblical Prophecy of a New World System in the End Times* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logon International, 1973), vi-vii.

[3] About A.D. 133 Aristeides, a teacher of philosophy, presented a defense of Christianity to Emperor Hadrian.

[4] Charles Swindoll, *Intimacy with the Almighty*. Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, Inc., 1996, p. 66-71.

[5] Charles Swindoll, *Intimacy with the Almighty*. Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, Inc., 1996, p. 28.

[6] Portions quoted and adapted from Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997.

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