

There is nothing in life one cannot have if he is willing to pay the price; everything that manifests in our lives is a price we are paying for some state of consciousness. We do not really make much sense out of life, nor do we make progress toward betterment until we admit to ourselves that our problems, our ill health, our lack, the inharmony we suffer, or the injustice, are in themselves the price we are paying for ignorance or misuse of the law.

Think of these unwanted things as a kind of obscured luxury tax. Jesus deals with this. His statements pertaining to it can appear to be quite confusing. "If any man cometh to me and hateth not his own father and mother and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple." "He that loveth father, mother, brother, sister more than me is not worthy of me." As for the word "hate", at the time of translation of the scriptures from the Latin Vulgate into the English spoken during the reign of King James, it meant "to turn away, to put aside," not what it means today. Jesus therefore intends in this statement to instruct us as we would instruct one who has just had a cast removed from his leg, "You will now have to put aside your crutches and walk without them; then your recovery will be complete." The young person who is unable to cut the cords of dependence on his parents cannot fulfill his own creative powers.

Some people are rebuffed at Jesus' emphasis on giving up "things." They feel, mistakenly, that they are being urged to make sacrifices in order to placate God, but this is not what Jesus is all about. "Follow me. Be my disciple," are not for us to give up one kind of dependence and take on another. Jesus had discovered the whole law and had so completely identified himself with it that he referred to it in the first person, "I am the life." "I am the way." This is an important state of consciousness that we all must reach, but these teachings mean to follow the divinity within yourself, having found it first yourself. To be Jesus' disciple means to learn of him, to find the God-self within yourself just as he found the God-self within himself.

Jesus knew that for every human achievement a price must be paid. This can be clearly seen in the account of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus wanting to be a disciple and was told that first he must sell all he had and give to the poor. Then he could come and follow the Master. The young man was being tested to find where his faith was, and the question was, "How could he find a higher level of life if he was going to have his faith attached to the lower level of life?" We are told that the young man turned sorrowfully away because he had great possessions. Now, Jesus was not really saying that people have to give everything away before they can tread the spiritual path; he was really trying to find out if that young man could reach the higher level. Had he been able to give up everything he would not have had to do so. That he could not meant that he was unable to pay the price for the greater life. With all his wealth, he lacked the one thing he wanted most, willingness to go all the way in the spiritual quest.

Jesus is likewise speaking to the need for self-denial and discipline. Every art, science, every feat of skill requires discipline and self-denial. Before Jesus achieved mastery he was an ordinary carpenter in a dusty provincial village. It is important to see that a great deal of discipline, training, and preparation are the way to success, and they are certainly the thread of the meaning of Jesus' message in the gospel. Actually, Jesus was not such a hard taskmaster as he seems to be. He was simply a very wise, spiritual philosopher, for in a sense, there is no such thing as self-denial; it is not all forbidding negation of self that so many shrink from. What we term self-denial is simply the price we pay to attain the ends we have set for ourselves.

If we do not deny ourselves for the happy, harmonious, successful life, then we will deny ourselves the happy, harmonious, successful life. If we do not deny our-

selves bad temper and a wagging tongue, then we deny ourselves friendship. If we do not deny ourselves laziness, inefficiency, and a resistant attitude toward our employers, then we will deny ourselves a better job or a higher salary. If we deny ourselves respect for and appreciation of and responsibility toward our employees, then we will deny ourselves their loyalty and wholehearted efforts in our behalf. Self-denial, you see, is inescapable, whoever we may be. It is the price we pay when we set our hearts on some chosen goal. Therefore, in a way, Jesus is saying it is not so much what you take up as what you give up that counts in life. Whatever we desire we can have in some form, but we must first pay the price, and this includes letting go of that which is behind, and stretching forward to that which is before us, to use the idiom of Paul, to keep on pressing on.

Living on the Mississippi Delta are many people who construct their simple houses from flotsam and jetsam that has floated down the river. One particularly humble shack, however, has been fronted by its inhabitants with an imposing front porch, complete with stately columns and intricately carved cornices, many times the height and width of the dwelling behind it and obviously derived from the entrances of the large, ante bellum plantation homes to be found all over the South. When asked why he had put up such a porch the owner replied, "A man can dream, can't he? Some day we are going to have a whole big house to go with this front porch." Yes, we can dream, indeed, we must dream, if we are ever going to make progress in life; it is part of the price we of necessity must pay.

Do you remember using an old-fashioned hand pump? Often it had to be primed with water to get the main flow of water going through it. Water drove out the air, thus creating a vacuum, soaked the leather washer, and then water would flow as long as the handle was worked. In our lives as individuals we must continually prime the pump, so to speak; we must work harder and prepare ourselves for advancement by study and training; we must industriously think positively and expand our vision. Many an individual has overcome tremendous handicaps and personal challenges and gone on to great success, because he was willing to prime the pump, and to keep on pumping. Ezio Pinza was told by his first vocal teacher that he would never make a singer. Charles Steinmetz, the great electrical wizard, was as a schoolboy so poor in math that he needed special tutoring. John Wanamaker, the famous and successful merchant, had only two years of formal schooling.

Here is the point, are you willing to let go of your previous attitudes, your limiting self-image, are you willing to "hate" as it was used earlier in this lesson, to loose the holds, the strings that people and situations have on you, and to launch out on faith, believing and acting as if you believed that you have an inner resource working with you? Can you, so to speak, sell all you have and give to the poor? Can you go all the way with what you desire? Can you give up everything and make it first in your thinking? This is what I refer to as the price you must pay.

In my book Discover the Power Within You, I retell a story from the folklore of Java of an eager young man following a young beauty along the road. When she asked why he was following her he replied that she was the most ravishing creature he had ever seen and that he was quite in love with her. She rejoined that he had only to glance behind to see her sister, who was far more beautiful. When he did this he saw a repulsive creature which caused him to tell the first girl that she had lied to him. She came back with the answer that so had he lied to her, because if he were so enamored why had he turned around to look for something even better? This, in a sense, is the rich young ruler who wanted to have faith in a greater life, who wanted ardently to follow the Master, who wanted to go all the way, but who finally had to turn around.

Remember, though, that we can achieve anything if we are willing to pay the price, to let go of the binding past, and to press forward to the higher calling.