



When you come to the Fork in the Road, you must choose one or the other.

O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. (Jer 17:13)

When we undertake to move toward God and His righteousness, we must necessarily depart from the world and its allurements. As we have discussed often before, sin is a direction of greater and greater descent into the abyss of ruin. (Psalms 1:1) Moving toward a sinful lifestyle is a direction, always, away from God. The greatest concern God has for us is that we are moving TOWARD Him in righteous contrition. In the Gospel of St. Luke, the 15th chapter, we read of the Prodigal Son who departed from his loving father and went into a “far country” and wasted all his living.

When “he came to himself” he resolved to return to his father and admit his unworthiness. He then arose and returned. His father had anxiously awaited his prodigal son’s return. He anxiously watched the road as it wound out to the distant horizon. He watched as days turned to weeks, and weeks to months, and months to years. But one glorious day, the father spotted the son as he emerged on that same road on which he had departed so long ago. Even though he was yet afar off, dressed in the filthy rags of the pig sty, and stinking of the refuse thereof, the father saw him and knew him. He ran to meet him, embraced his smelly person, covered his filth with the best robe (of imputed righteousness), placed shoes of liberty upon his feet, and a ring of authority on his finger. That is what Jesus did for the Woman at Jacob’s Well who, after coming face to face with the Lord, spoke with such authority in Sychar that all believed her.

The life of the true Christian is one of forsaking the alluring fantasies of worldly and carnal temptations and embracing the things of Christ. We cannot have it both ways. *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the*

other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt 6:24) Did you grasp the significance of these words of Jesus? The Christian disciple must not only depart from the world and its sinful ways, but must literally hate sin and the world. Are you in a church that compromises the Word of God in favor of attracting adherents in great numbers? What does God command in such matters? *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* (2 Cor 6:17-18)

Do we have any sound examples in God's Word of fleeing the temptations of the world at all costs? Remember the young man, Joseph – son of Jacob and Rachel – who was an Old Testament Type of Christ. He was tempted by Potiphar's wife. How did he respond to the temptations? *"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out."* (Gen 39:7-12) When we flee temptation, will all be 'peaches and cream' thereafter? Not necessarily. It cost Joseph a great deal to do the right things, but he did it at all costs. *"And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home."* (Gen 39:15-16) Joseph was falsely accused before Potiphar and thrown into an Egyptian prison as a result.

What about the need to forsake even common labors for Christ? *"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."* (Matt 4:19-20) When the Call to follow Christ comes to us, we must forsake all and follow Him without delay. We may feel that our common labors are important, but there is nothing of greater importance than following Christ as He leads us.

Sometimes we must leave our gifts that we would offer to the Lord by the wayside until our hearts are attuned to His perfect will. If we have offended a friend or brother, a sister or a stranger, we should first be reconciled before offering our gifts to God out of a heart that is burdened with the slightest malice. *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* (Matt 5:23-24)

We all have need of physical water to sustain our mortal bodies, but there is a Water that is of far greater essence than that which comes from an earthen well – it is that Water of Life that proceeds from the very Fountain of Living Waters (Jesus Christ)! When we have found something better than the paltry gifts of the earth, we will grasp it without hesitation and leave the lesser to lie in place. The Woman at Jacob's Well brought an empty bucket to the well with the intent of getting water from a hole 100 ft. deep in the earth. But she left her empty bucket and rushed back to the city to tell all that she had found something of so much greater worth. *"The woman then left her*

waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:28-29)

The blue prints of a house do not constitute the building, but only present the principles and specifications as to how the house should be built. *"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God"* (Heb 6:1) Once we have the perfect plan, let us go forth to build the perfect life. The foundation must be built first and with great care, but afterwards, we must no longer dwell upon the foundation with constant thought, but begin to build the super-structure upon it.

That with which we fail to part for Christ's sake may be the one thing that separates us from the Lord of Glory for Eternity. What of the rich young ruler? *"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* (Mark 10:17) This young man was seeking something that he might be able to do with his hands or wealth to inherit eternal life, but salvation is not of good works but of grace alone. He thought he had kept the commandments from childhood on, but he had failed even in keeping the first commandment. *"Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me."* *"And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."* (Mark 10:18-25) The rich young man had allowed riches to come between himself and God, and he could not part with them or forsake them.

So we have learned from the texts quoted today that:

1. We cannot come to God and leave one foot behind in Mammon. We cannot believe God and be, at the same time, double-minded;
2. Our obedience to God may cost us in the pleasures of the world as Joseph's obedience caused him to be placed in prison;
3. We may have to part with our cherished professions or dearly held friends when the call of Christ supersedes those things;
4. We must often leave behind the lesser possessions of this life for the better possessions of eternal life when we receive the Water of Life instead of the water of the world – just as did the woman at the well leave her empty bucket to carry the true Water to her friends and neighbors;
5. Regardless of our priorities in this world, whether professions, riches, or loved ones, we must drop those things at once to do the labors to which our Lord calls us just as the disciples left their nets and at once followed Christ at His call;
6. We must be constantly growing upon the foundation laid in our hearts by Christ, or else we shall be shrinking in Him;

7. We must never allow anything to eclipse our focus on God. Whatever comes between us and God must be dispensed with.

It is my hope your minds will view these texts today with solemn resolve and take heed to your souls for Christ's sake.