

The Capacity and The Compelling

“I am the vine and ye are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

“The love of Christ constraineth [compels] us” (II Corinthians 5:14).

We have been saved by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have been joined to God in an eternal union with Him. Throughout eternity we will be engaged in God’s universal occupations whatsoever they may be.

But meanwhile, what shall we do on earth? We could have as many as threescore or fourscore years from salvation to final glorification. Is it to be only the treadmill of the endless struggle for piety? Or the gauntlet of hardship and suffering? Or the burden of the obligation to save the world—a lifelong indebtedness for redemption? Actually, none of the above. Struggle? Yes, but not a treadmill and not for piety. A treadmill implies a futile track to nowhere. Our struggle builds us up in the faith and proves the durability of our salvation. And as far as piety is concerned, if by piety we mean religious conformity, we are merely growing day by day in our capacity to cope with life and to glorify God. It is not a specialized exercise like “weight lifting,” to build a bigger “spiritual” physique, but a natural day by day experience with Christ to develop our own personalities in keeping with our gifts. It only becomes an artificial thing when manipulated by others to conform to humanly devised standards. Left to ourselves to grow within our own personal frame of reference, we will find it not always easy, but certainly rewarding in terms of greater capacity to cope and a deeper harmony within.

As far as suffering and hardship are concerned—yes. But we will always have the grace to bear it. We will not have the grace to anticipate suffering (“What would I do, if . . .”), but the grace to handle it when it comes. We have a clue in I John—“*As He is, so are we in this world*” (4:17). Peter says more succinctly—“*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps*” (I Peter 2:21). In one major aspect, Jesus came to be the sacrifice for our sins (which we can never be). In another sense He came to run the gauntlet of human suffering; to fully experience the meaning of the fall. We, too, suffer the ultimate consequences of the fall, and, in our steadfastness by the grace and power of God, we stand as the perpetual symbol to Satan of the total efficacy of God’s eternal redemption. So our suffering has meaning, both in our own development and also as a witness to the power and glory of God. It is not merely the “running of the gauntlet,” but suffering for Christ’s sake. In this respect, suffering is regarded as a gift from God. To the Philippians Paul says, “*Because it is a gracious gift to us on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer on His behalf*” (1:29) (Author’s translation).

And the obligation to save the world as the price of redemption? That is a lie of the Devil—designed to discourage the believer and, as Jesus accused the Pharisee’s, to burden him down and “*make him twofold more the child of hell*

than you yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).

First of all, redemption is truly free. *“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32). Therefore, we do not OWE Him anything for it—not because the gift is not of infinite worth, but because we are bankrupt and cannot pay. However much we may value our own services, they will never be enough to pay Him. What is the life of the Son of God worth? Therefore, it is not only ridiculous, but the ultimate insult to offer to pay. But what then is the basis of our service? After all He has done for us do we not have an obligation? You didn’t hear me—whatever your offer, it is so paltry in the light of the gift, as to be an insult. But why then do we serve? There is no reason. There is no “because” attached to our service. If we serve because we owe Him, it is an insult. If we serve Him because of the need in the world, the need will break us—it is too much. If we serve because of the reward, we are hirelings and scoundrels. But if we serve because of penalty, we are in bondage and not free. But why then? Paul said it—*“The love of Christ compels me”* (II Corinthians 5:14).

It is not love FOR Christ, but the love OF Christ. Love for Christ puts it back in the debt column. The Greek text has a genitive case here. It is Christ in us reaching out to others through us. The word for love is *agape*—“caring.” It is Christ’s caring, not our own puny human emotion. It is “compelling” because it goes beyond human zeal, and has its limitless reservoir in the Spirit of Christ within us. All thought of human obligation or reward, or even penalty, is totally irrelevant. Such love from God Himself is directly from His Spirit to others. It is not even processed in the paltry patterns of human emotion.

God gives both the gift and the desire to do it—the capacity and the compelling. To the Corinthians Paul said, *“What do you have that you did not receive (as a gift)? And why do you act as though you did not receive it?”* (I Corinthians 4:7). If you are not doing what others are doing, or what others THINK you ought to be doing, the probability is that you do not have their gift. It is the constant presumption of leaders that everybody ought to be doing what they are doing, or what they think others ought to be doing. The unfortunate truth is that they need the leverage to get their own humanly devised programs accomplished. It is unconscionable to so handle the sheep. This is not the spirit of the shepherd, but the “cattle drover.” It is a gross deception to present their own programs as from the Lord. Usually it is mere human “empire-building”—bigger and better things. The added phrase “for the glory of God” is an egregious presumption.

Don’t let others put their own yoke on you. Christ says, *“Take My yoke . . . it is easy . . . and you will find rest to your souls.”* If your efforts at service are a burden to you, or you feel guilty because you are not doing what you are being asked to do, maybe you are taking someone else’s yoke. If it is Christ’s yoke, it will not be burdensome. You will do it gladly and willingly. It may be sometimes difficult, but never burdensome.

But how do we know what our gift is? It will be a conviction from within yourself, and not from some self-styled prophet. Another believer might confirm

what you already sense about yourself, but it will be harmonious with your spirit, and you will have peace about it.

Meanwhile, just do what you are doing. If Christ has something else for you, He will show you. In fact, it is His responsibility to show you. Until He does, just be at peace. Probably what you are doing now is what He wants for you at the present. Your spirit should be free. Jesus said, “*You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). Whatever or whoever puts you in bondage is not of the truth. Paul says in I Corinthians 14:33—“*For God is not the author of confusion but peace.*” Anything that is confusing or robs you of your peace is not from Him. Remember, “*His yoke is easy and His burden is light.*” Wait for Him to give you **THE CAPACITY AND THE COMPELLING.**

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