

J.R. Miller:

Loyalty to Christ begins in the heart. We must love him supremely. "He who loves father or mother more than me" is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me" is not worthy of me." Nothing makes worthy discipleship, if love is lacking. In these days, Christian activity is emphasized and required. Never was the church of Christ as active as it is now. This is beautiful. But with all our activity, we fear lest we are not loving Christ as we should.

In one of the epistles to the seven churches, Jesus commends the church of Ephesus for many things"its works, its toil, its patience and that it could not bear evil men. "But," he adds, "I have this against you"that you have left your first love." With all its activity and self-sacrificing service"it did not love Jesus as it used to do.

G. Campbell Morgan tells of a friend of his who had a little daughter that he dearly loved. They were great friends, the father and daughter, and were always together. But there seemed to come an estrangement on the child's part. The father could not get her company as formerly. She seemed to shun him. If he wanted her to walk with him"she had something else to do. The father was grieved and could not understand what the trouble was. His birthday came and in the morning his daughter came to his room, her face radiant with love, and handed him a present. Opening the parcel, he found a pair of exquisitely worked slippers.

The father said, "My child, it was very good of you to buy me such lovely slippers." "O father," she said, "I did not buy them"I made them for you." Looking at her he said, "I think I understand now, what long been a mystery to me. Is this what you been doing the last three months?" "Yes," she said, "but how did you know how long I had been at work on them?" He said, "Because for three months I have missed your company and your love. I have wanted you with me"but you have been too busy. These are beautiful slippers"but next time buy your present"and let me have you all the days. I would rather have my child herself"than anything she could make for me."

We are in danger of being so busy in the Lord's work"that we cannot be enough with the Lord in love's fellowship. He may say to us, "I like your works, your toils, your service"but I miss the love you gave me at first." There is real danger that we get so busy in striving to be active Christians, so absorbed in our tasks and duties, our efforts to bring others into the church"that Christ himself shall be less loved and shall miss our communing with him!

Loyalty means first of all"heart devotion. Has Christ really the highest place in your heart? It is not your work he wants most"it is you! It is beautiful to do things for him"it is still more beautiful to make a home for him in your heart!

A young man, at great cost, has brought from many countries the most beautiful materials he could find and has built as a memorial to his dead wife"an exquisite little chapel. Only a few men could do anything so rare, so lovely. But the poorest of us can enthrone our loved ones in our hearts; and the poorest of us can please Christ even more"by making a little sanctuary in our hearts for him.

Then there must be loyalty of life. If there is true, supreme love in the heart"there should be a holy life and character. Here again we need to guard against devotion to the work and service of Christ"while in the life the world sees there are so many flaws and blemishes, that the impression is not to the honor of Christ. He is very patient with our infirmities and our stumblings. If he were not, who of us ever could hope to please him?

We are inexperienced, mere learners, at first. We misspell our words. We blunder in our grammar. We sing out of tune. Some of us are just beginning our Christian life, and are discouraged already because we have failed to be what we meant to be, and to live as beautifully as we were sure we would live. Christ is patient with us"when he knows that we are true in our heart, that we really want to be faithful.

Charles Kingsley says: Oh, at least be able to say in that day, "Lord, I am no hero. I have been careless, cowardly, sometimes all but mutinous. Punishment I have deserved"I deny it not. But a traitor I have never been; a deserter I have never been. I have tried to fight on your side in the battle against evil. I have tried to do the duty which lay nearest me, and to leave whatever you committed to my charge"a little better than I found it. I have not been perfect"but I have at least tried to be perfect."

Christ never forgets how frail we are. But he does not want us ever to give up. Though we stumble when we are

learning to walk, he wants us to get up and try again. Though we are defeated in our battle tomorrow, he wants us to rise at once and keep on fighting.

A true soldier may be wounded, may be beaten in many battles—but he never is a deserter, never is a traitor. He is always loyal. It is only when we desert Christ, turn away from him, become false to him—that we really fail. You never can fail—if you are true, if you are faithful.

But we should always keep the standard of loyalty up to the highest point. The command is: "Be perfect—even as your Father in heaven is perfect." That standard must never be lowered. Christ's own thought of loyalty is simple faithfulness. "Be faithful." Faithful seems a gracious word. It requires nothing impossible. It demands nothing unreasonable. It asks only for a just return. It does not exact ten talents—when only two have been given. It is a word of love. Christ is a gentle taskmaster. Yet the word sets a high requirement—one, too, which cannot be lowered. It must have the BEST that we can do. When much has been given—a little will not be a satisfactory return.

There must be loyalty also in character. Paul suggests a cluster of the fruits of the Spirit which do not take an active form, "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." Most of these are quiet virtues. They are qualities of character. One might possess many of them—and not be able to say he was an active Christian. Peace is not active. Joy, long-suffering, goodness are not active. Yet these graces are essential to a complete Christian life. We must think of the passive and quiet virtues—as well as the active ones—when we are trying to discover the full meaning of loyalty to Christ.

Here is a man, for example, who bears the name of Christian. But he is not loving—he is hard to live with, irritable, angry, resentful. He has no joy—but is a morose, gloomy, a sad man. He has no peace—but is fretful, anxious, restless, full of fear and worry. He has no meekness—but is impatient, irascible, unmerciful. Lacking the qualities of love, joy, peace, meekness, can you call such a man a loyal follower of Christ? He may be a lively Christian, so far as activities are concerned: a prominent church-member, a zealous church officer, foremost in the organizations of the church. Yet he is not a man you would call a beautiful Christian. Loyalty must be Christlike in character, in disposition, in spirit, in the shining of the face, in the lovingness of the heart.

But loyalty to Christ, must also be active. A true patriot is a quiet and peaceable citizen in times of peace. But when the country is imperiled, he is ready for service. He takes the soldier's place. The Christian belongs to the army of Christ and must follow his King to battle. He who fails to do his part in the conquest of the world, cannot call himself fully loyal to Christ. He may not be an enemy of Christ—but he is a shirker, or he is lacking in courage.

Loyalty to Christ means activity in the service of Christ. Find your work—what you can do to make the world holier, happier, truer—and do it with all your might!

A good woman deplored her lack of usefulness. Yet many knew that her daily life was a constant blessing. She sweetened a home, blessed a household of children and young people, and manifested the love of Christ among her neighbors. Was not that being an active Christian? There is an activity of BEING—as well as of DOING.

Loyalty to Christ also demands of us—the uttermost of sincerity and truth in all our living. God desires truth in the inward parts. Yet are there not men who claim to be Christians—and are living a lie? There are lives that are honey-combed by all manner of unfaithfulnesses, dishonesties, injustices and injuries to others—and by many secret sins.

What does the lesson of loyalty to Christ have to teach us about these things? Are covered sins—safely hidden? Are they out of sight forever? Oh, no! Be sure that your sin will find you out. The word is not, "Be sure that your sin will be found out." It may not be found out in this world—but it will "find you out." It will plague you, spoil your happiness, make your life wretched.

What shall we do about these wrong things we have done? A life of loyalty to Christ—means a life that is white, clean, through and through. None can build a beautiful, shining character—upon covered sins. Joy is part of a complete Christian life, and no one can be joyous—with sins concealed in his heart.

Paul has a word about bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. We should test every feeling, every imagination, every disposition, all conduct, by this test—loyalty to Christ. Someone does you a wrong, and you feel like getting angry. Be loyal to Christ. Keep your whole life, every day, every hour—under the sway of his Word.

Loyalty to Christ

Loyalty to Christ! There really is nothing else in religion. It is all in these three words. I will be faithful to Christ! I will be true to Christ. I will please Christ. I will be obedient to Christ. I will do his will. I will submit to his discipline. I will bear the cross he lays upon me!