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LIFE BRINGS DEATH—DEATH BRINGS LIFE

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"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."—John 12:24.

Edison once said that, "if I live ten years longer I will bring out of the air the Sermon on the Mount, and all the other open air orators of history." We have wondered what a saying or parable of Christ's we should prefer to hear if we could choose. Nothing seems more startling and dramatic than the words we have quoted.

The philosophy of Jesus was original and astounding. "He spake as never man spake." Take these words, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and his mother, and his wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and hi sown life also, he cannot be my disciple." If that should be interpreted literally as it sounds, no man on earth with human instincts could measure up to it. It contradicts every civilized emotion. Every mother of the animal kingdom would fight to the death to protect her young. Try to bother the little biddies, and see what the old mother hen will do.

But the explanation and application can be found in the paradox of the corn of wheat—it must die to live. Here is a law that is demonstrated in every realm of life—animal and vegetable. We once stepped on a hickory nut and it crushed like an eggshell. It had lain alone in the sun and air and died. Wheat was found in an Egyptian mummy over 3,000 years old. Most of the grains had died; but a few germinated when put in damp soil. There is a tree in South Carolina the horticulturists tell us is 1050 years old. Nearly 300 years before William the Conqueror landed on the English coast, a small acorn fell and buried itself in the sand and, as a result, 50 generations have sheltered beneath its shade. "If it fall into the ground and die, it bringeth forth much fruit." This striking illustration has to do with the human soul for time and eternity.

There are two Greek words used in this famous paradox, zuke and zuo. Zuke is the whole physical, moral and mental organism. The body—its wants, passions and appetites. The mind with its ambitions, pride, selfishness. If unregenerated, it is unlimited in its depraved propensities. If we take a check-up on any human this will obtain. The zuke demands undivided allegiance; eat, drink, clothes, amusements—physical and emotional thrills. One movie actress offered \$10,000 to any one who could give her a thrill. The zuke can be pampered and gratified until, by and by, it becomes incapable of stimuli of any character.

All this may obtain; but the final tragedy is at the end of the way. Life is a burned-out cinder. Lord Byron was the idol of England, handsome, rich, and a nobleman, also one of

the greatest literary geniuses of his generation. His zuke had full sway; he drank the cup to its dregs. On his 36th birthday, he wrote his last poem, when life should have been at its best. These lines were in that poem:

"My life is in the yellow leaf,
The fruits and flowers of love are gone,
The wormwood, the canker and the grief,
Are mine alone.
The fire that on my bosom preys,
Is lone as some volcanic isle,
No torch is kindled at its blaze,
A funeral pile."

This is the swan song of a ruined personality. "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity," cries another who had lived in the superlative degree from every angle. He who saves his zuke will lose his zuo—life. How the wisdom of the Master's words ring across the centuries—"He that will save his life, shall lose it." The meaning is far more than to lose an object and be unable to find it. It means destruction, like a block-buster falling on a cathedral with all its marvellous furniture; a 300 pound bomb falling on Notre Dame, with altars, windows and fine arts, its valuable works of masters smashed beyond repair. This is a true picture of lost life and manhood. Man is God's masterpiece, endowed with hands of skill, brain with unlimited capacity, a spirit co-ordinated with two worlds—two eternities.

We once saw a beautiful window in a Canadian cathedral, made from shattered glass of a French cathedral bombed by the Germans in the first World War. Thus can our Great Architect assemble the shattered elements into character of beauty and power. Satan cannot destroy beyond the reassembling power of our Lord. The body can be destroyed beyond our remotest hope, but all things are possible with our God.

May we consider losing the zuke—body—and what it will mean in our life. It will mean obedience to our Master. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." The voices and demands of the zuke—the physical, mental and emotional gratification—care only for the life that now is. We must learn to say No! Paul says: "I die daily." I keep my body under." But this does not mean to dehumanize ourselves. The propensities are God-given, and when mastered, are sources of vitality and power. Only as they are controlled, do we suffer there. Mrs Fred Brown, Dec 4, 1943, writes: "The zuke is kept in right relationship."

The Master gives us another acid test in discipleship, one of the hardest of all requirements. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brother and sister, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." How could language be more explicit, and humanly impossible. Paul says, "No man ever hated his

own flesh, but nourisheth it as the Lord the Church." He was discussing the marriage relation. But the Master's words are a contradiction to that of Paul. What does he mean? He meant if we are his disciples, he must have first place in our affection, our interests, and our investments. He must occupy the throne in our hearts; he must be exalted above all human relationships. Our obligations to parents and children are topmost, but "In all things he must have the pre-eminence."

In all these things we are taught death to the zuke, otherwise it is worshipping at a shrine of flesh, which will return to the earth; but if we crucify the flesh we shall live unto eternal life. It is utterly impossible in our strength. We can sympathize with the Apostles when they asked: "Who then can be saved" But with God all things are possible. In all the yearnings and fleshly desires, we know that down deep below all human and earthly ties, there is something that, when once awakened, hungers for God. It can be smothered out by fleshly gratification, but in every human being there is a soul that must find God before coming into its own.

To fall into the ground and die, as it were, is a battle more fierce and continuous than was ever fought on a battlefield: "greater," says the wise man, "than he that taketh a city." Where is our battle line? We have in addition to our battles within, enemies without. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities." We are commanded to "put on the whole armour of God." When once we can conquer the Fifth Columns within, we can easily overcome the enemies without. It will require the FBI of God's grace to run down the Trojan horses within the citadel of the soul, or the battle will be lost. "The mark of the prize of the high calling of God" should be our battle cry for victory. "If a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it bringeth forth fruit; but if not, it will abide alone and die."

UNRESTRAINED CHILDREN

J. Edgar Hoover, chief of the F. B. I., says: "For years we have listened to some quack theorists and psuedo psychologists who have preached that discipline and control were bad for children—that they should be left uninhibited to work out their own life patterns, their own self-discipline. But you don't acquire self-discipline if you never learn what discipline is; neither can life's problems be worked out without experience which can be secured only through hard knocks or by guidance from the experience of others. Now we are reaping the harvest." The most unfortunate part of the picture is that the children suffer the most, like Elis' unrestrained children, they suffer because of the foolish indulgence of the parents.—Exchange.