

The King's Highway

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Living on False Pretences

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I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.—Rev. iii. 1.

1. Some live on a mere **designation**.

They are called Christians. Most of us are known as such. We bear Christian names; we belong to a Christian nation. How little, in thousands of cases, does this mean! We know how much it ought to mean. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." How much that name meant to them! They were "disciples." They called Christ their Master; they listened reverentially to His teaching; they believed in Him; they loved Him; they followed in His steps and shared His fortunes; they strove to make Him known; for His sake they suffered the loss of all things, and went to prison and death. Yet the Christian name means little to thousands of our neighbours. They are known by that strangest of all designations, "nominal Christians."

"Nominal" Christianity is a poor thing to live with. It is a poor thing in days of fierce temptation and of searching sorrow. In no days does it bring satisfaction to the heart. Nominal religion is a poor thing to die with. In dying hours hope and happiness sink into ruin because they are built on stones of emptiness, and not on the rock. No one wants a nominal heaven, or to wear the "likeness" of a kingly crown. All mere nominalism will fare badly at last. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

The mission of Christ is to bring in reality; to sweep from all mere semblances, artificialities, and names of religion; His one great purpose is to establish real relations between our soul and God. Alas for us if we have only the name of Christ! "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

2. Some live on a mere **memory**.

Sardis, once a living Church, was now living on the recollection of what it had been and done. It had kept the name and cherished traditions of the past; but its present character was poor and its experience low. How easy to keep the old, beautiful, stirring names and cries when all the reality, force, and glow of their origin have perished! There is a startling, mournful contrast between the grand history of the churches, heroic workers, mark-

ed achievements, and its present poverty and deadness! Yet it lives on its splendid past, and flatters itself in the life and work of vanished generations.

It is not what we were, but what we are. How are things with us today? The true spiritual life is never merely retrospective. There comes a time when a man financially "lives on his means"; intellectually it is often the same, that a man lives in remembering and wondering at the creations of his best years, as decrepit Sir Christopher Wren did when he was wheeled about St. Paul's, or as decaying Swift did when listening to the reading of his wonderful books. The inward man, however, must not thus decay and live in memory. What am I now, and what my hope? Am I gaining victories, overtaking new work, attaining fresh graces, bringing forth fruit unto God?

3. Some live on their **reputation**.

It is quite possible that a Church may enjoy a high reputation for purity, spirituality, and efficiency—a reputation gained through years of faithfulness—and yet have entirely lost the attributes which once gained it credit.

Living on one's reputation is a melancholy business. It is sad to see a threadbare merchant starving on the dwindling relics of his former fortune; to see the failing orator reproducing stale scraps of knowledge and rhetoric which once commanded applause; sad to listen to an old violinist whose fame survives his voice; and saddest of all are those professors of religion who acquire no fresh strength and treasure, but who contrive to keep themselves in countenance by making the most of an ever attenuating reputation. We must not live in the opinion of others, but in our own rich and supporting consciousness; we must not live a fancied life in others' breath, but a real, true life in the purity and power of our own soul. What does God think of us? Has He found our works perfect?

4. Some live on a mere **appearance**.

Drummond writes of the African white ant; "One may never see the insect, possibly, in the flesh, for it lives underground; but its ravages confront one at every turn. You build your house, perhaps, and for a few months fancy you have pitched upon the one solitary site in the country where there are no white ants. But one day suddenly the doorpost totters, and lintel and rafters come down together with a crash. You look at a section of the wrecked timbers, and discover that the whole inside is eaten away. The apparently solid logs of which the rest of the house is built are now mere cylinders of bark, and through the

Cost of Discipleship

R. Barclay Warren

Jesus Christ never soft-pedalled the cost of discipleship in order to procure more followers. We read, "There went great multitudes with Him: and He turned and said unto them, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.'" Luke 14:25-27. Jesus Christ will brook no competitors for first place in the heart of the would-be disciple. He calls for an all-out loyalty and devotion. Life itself must be secondary. But the cost is more than negative. The disciple must bear his cross and follow Jesus. He must be not only dead indeed unto the world but alive unto God. There is a task to do, a path to be trod. One thinks of Churchill's famous expression of "blood, sweat, and tears." He said, "We will defend our country on the sea, on the beaches, in the fields and in the towns." That spirit helped us win ultimate victory.

Jesus urged the would-be disciple to carefully count the cost, lest after he had laid the foundation he would not be able to finish it. If you fear you cannot win, it is better not to start. He concluded with the statement, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

The issue is clear-cut. The way is plain. There is no such person as a half-Christian. We are either wholly for Christ or we are rebelling against Him. Jesus Himself said, "He that is not with me is against me." Matt. 12:30. On which side are you?

We are assured that the way of discipleship pays. Our Lord said, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."—Matt. 19:29.

thickest of them you could push your little finger." Many influences act on Christian character much as these secret pests act upon the beams of houses. Secret sins silently eat out the pith of the Christian life, and yet everything remains the same to the eye. The heart, core, and fibre of the Christian character and life perished piecemeal, yet the hollow thing keeps up its old aspect and credit.

Lie not; but let thy heart be true to God, Thy mouth to it, thy actions to them both. —Taken from Emmanuel