

Almost 12-21-08

By David Keeling

www.earlychurchtruth.com

keelingdavid@hotmail.com

Greetings to you in Jesus' name. I'm thankful for the message in that last song we sang about the Lord and His agonizing in Gethsemane, surrendering His will. I think in eternity we'll find that there is where His cross was and that it wasn't about the wood and the nails; I think those things were very trivial to Him. So much emphasis is put on just the physical suffering, which was horrible, but yet His real travail was in His will, just like our real travail. That's why we put so much emphasis in our salvation laying in our wills - not just in what we do - but our will determines what we do. We are either willed and yielded to obey or we're willed and yielded not to obey. We can say many of the same things as many people, and yet without that willingness it's so confusing sometimes trying to preach to others and talk about obedience; but it's not the outward things that we're talking about, even though it will affect the outward. Whenever our will is surrendered to please God and to do His will these are evidences of things that unite us ... and it all comes from a surrendered will. That's why we can read about Christ and His tribulation and we can sing about it how He was in the garden and prayed in agony with drops of blood. It was Him surrendering; 'Not My will but Thine be done'.

This morning I want to talk basically to that, but maybe coming at it a little bit different; how we can be doing a lot of right things and still not have our will surrendered to God. I want to read not only that but in things that we've done or things that we might do.

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

We've talked before about these people and this follows Hebrews 11 - the heroes of the faith - and I get the image and the picture of all of these people, these heroes of the faith, in eternity and there are a cloud of witnesses or a grandstand kind of (to help paint a picture here) of people surrounded around in a coliseum, and down in the middle is the field where the players [us] who are currently playing or working. They are the ones that the focus is on. The generation that we live in is focused at the grand stand now in eternity; heaven, hell, the saints before us are all watching and looking in this world and watching who's playing and who's there and who's doing what. We are being watched by a multitude of people who have gone on before us. I believe the angels and devils are watching in this grandstand. It's our opportunity now; that's what I want to put most of the emphasis on.

Lets go over to verse 12 where it says; *Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees*; here thinking of this grandstand we're thinking of someone in a struggle or in a battle. We get weak and we get beat up a little bit. "Lift up, take courage!" is what he's saying, "*and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but rather let it be healed.*" Here he's talking about someone that has maybe gotten roughed up a little bit. Be encouraged. Keep on going. We might not be able to be doing exactly what we want to do right now, but keep on going! In Ephesians the bible says that after we've gone on to stand, if it gets down to where we can do nothing but stand, STAND! I've always been blessed with that. Whenever it gets down to where we can't even take another step, we'll stand. If you can't do nothing but crawl ... well ... crawl - but keep on going. Be encouraged. Don't get discouraged. Don't be turned out of the way, but rather let it be healed. Whenever we're offended, whenever we're set aside, whenever whatever happens we aren't to let it be a discouragement to us but let it be healed and keep on going.

Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Holiness. Following peace is part of the Christian faith. It's loving our enemies and doing right and doing good. Not just doing justly but doing what their Lord wants; going beyond justice. *And holiness without which, no man shall see the Lord.* If we would just take that verse, that should stop all the mouths of all the easy believe-ism crowd. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. *Looking diligently, lest any man should fail of the grace of God.* Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. Some would say that it would be impossible to fail the grace of God. But here the command is to look diligently lest you fail the grace of God. That destroys the definition of the modern day grace that says we're just all under grace and whatever we do is all forgotten and forgiven. It says look diligently lest YOU fail of the grace of God. Again that's like last week, it's not God's grace that's on trial here. It's not God's love that's on trial. It's what we're going to do with it. *Looking diligently lest any man fail the grace of God. Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled.* Don't let a little of discouragement turn into bitterness. It will take a whole pile of people with you. It's what it's saying here. Guard yourself from allowing these things to happen to us.

Hebrews 12:15-16 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. Here's what I wanted to get to; for one morsel of meat, Esau sold his birthright.

He took something temporary, fell for something temporary, made a wrong decision and sold his birthright. The bible says

he despised it, he thought little of it, he was willing to trade it for something temporary.

Hebrews 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

That's probably one of the saddest verses to me in the bible. Regret. Afterwards ... after he looked back, after it was, over whenever it was time for a blessing and he was looking and wanted that blessing, he had to look back and reflect and come to the reality that he had lost it. And he sought diligently to find it again. With tears. To find that blessing that he had lost. It wasn't there; it wasn't coming back. It was permanent. We have one life to live ... one life to live. At the end of that life, on the judgment day, we're going to go back through our lives; the Lord is going to bring every instance into remembrance, replay our lives, and we're going to sit there and watch it. We are going to see every choice that we made and why we made it. Where it could have been and where it is in reality. We have one life to live.

Esau, when it was time for the blessing, looked back and it wasn't there. He blew his chance. He blew his opportunity. He made the wrong choice and there was no correcting it. Now he had to face the stark reality of missing what God had for him. We think of eternity and there's hardly anything worse than the mental torment of what we should have or should not have done or what we could have done to avert a disaster. When we think of this life and we all know of things where people made a wrong decision and it just caused an absolute disaster for someone else and how hard it is for that person to ever forgive themselves for what they've done to someone else sometimes. Sometimes it's just unavoidable, but sometimes just some little something that we should have or could have done to change that, we did not do. People have gone absolutely crazy at times facing the guilt of what they should have or could have done. Their minds can't even handle the truth. I think even though there is a fire in hell, and that's terrible, I think one of the worst things in hell is going to be our own minds about what we should have or could have done or what we did do, when we had time to correct it and go back through and see others who are lost, others who we've turned aside, or others who we have hurt, and we have to live with that for all eternity. Oh we would like to change it. How many times we'd like to go back and fix it. But there's nothing to fix anymore, it's too late. Time has erased that opportunity in our life.

We have but one life. Sometimes we get a chance to fix things and what a blessing it is to be able to go back and fix a few things. We've all done things in our life; I think that's one of the evidences of real repentance, is restoration. A lot of times we think about people and how bad they were - like Brother Brian shared about the Evangelicals almost glorifying sin to how bad he was and how now you've cleaned up your life and quit doing things. That doesn't speak near as loud to me as if someone has done something and they've went back and fixed it whenever they had the opportunity. John the Baptist, whenever they came to be baptized, said, "Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance." Where is the evidence that you're sorry for what you've done? People you've hurt are still out there hurting. Go fix it.

Jesus said don't come to the altar with your gifts if there's someone out there you've hurt or you've offended and you haven't fixed it - 'I don't care what kind of gift you come and bring to Me, it's worthless.' Paraphrasing that just a little bit but I don't think I've done any harm to the scriptures. Because it just doesn't matter; there's not a real repentance there. If you've done wrong, go fix it if you can. Praise the Lord you have an opportunity. There are people who would give anything for an opportunity to fix some of the wrongs they've done. They'd give their own life to go back to one second in time to fix something that they wish they would have done differently. They'd give anything that they had just to fix that one thing. We can't undo the past. Sometimes we can patch up some things we've done wrong but we still can't undo the past.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you], and thereby many be defiled; Lest there [be] any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. One little thing, one morsel of meat. Sitting down and eating one meal was all that amounted to. That would have had to been a real meal, and here it was nothing but a bowl of soup that he sold out to, and when it came time for a blessing, it could not be found. It could not be found. Found no place of repentance.

I remember one time I was out knocking on doors; I don't remember just exactly all the circumstances but I had an opportunity to talk to this young family, well in fact they were living where I still had apartments and I felt like I ought to go visit and talk to them just a young family who had a couple of little children and I decided, "Well I'll just do it some other time." I had witnessed a little to them before but I just felt like 'well I ought to go and see them again,' and I put it off. Then it just got stronger and stronger, "Well you need to go see them." So I finally decided I was going to go and stopped everything then to go see them. I got there and knocked on the door and nobody came to the door. I knocked louder and no one came. I knocked loud enough to where the neighbor across the hall came out and said, "Are you looking for this couple?" "Yeah." She said, "Well haven't you heard?" I said, "Heard what?" She said, "Well, the night before last they were traveling in their car and had a wreck and were all killed." I might not have ever done anything, but after I was feeling like I should have went and talked to them, that was the last time I would ever have had an opportunity to and there's nothing I can do now but regret it.

We only have one life. We only have one opportunity. We only have one opportunity to fully surrender ourselves to the Lord. We only have one chance. We can toy around in this life and hold on to some pet thing we want, some little morsel of meat we want to hang on to ... we just don't want to quite give up all the way to the Lord because we held out. We'd rather stay in our little comfort zone than get associated with the cross. Think of the King in Acts 26; Paul had been preaching and been brought before the king for his testimony in v. 22-28;

Acts 26:22-28 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

I think that's gonna be the saddest cry throughout eternity is: almost, almost. I almost gave everything to follow Jesus. I gave 99%, but there was that one little thing that I couldn't quite give up, that I just didn't quite want to do.

Almost.

But failed.

I almost finished the race.

But did you finish?

I almost did the work I was supposed to do.

But did you do it?

Almost.

Is that going to work?

How well does almost work?

We've talked about the example of the man that was being chased by the tiger. He went out and took his gun out to go hunting. He got out there and left his house, locked the door and put his keys in his pocket. Got his gun and had a bullet in it, heard the tiger, so he went out looking for the tiger and he got a pretty good distance away from his house, and it [the tiger] was just right in front of him. Lifted his gun, aimed at the tiger and pulled the trigger and nothing happened; the gun jammed up. The tiger started walking toward him, the man walked backwards ... started walking faster, the tiger walked faster, then he turned around and started running, and he ran and ran towards the house and he could hear the tiger getting closer and closer to him all the time. He jumped up on the porch and got to the door and the tiger was right behind him and he heard him on the porch; he reached for the key and put it in the lock but dropped it ... he almost made it inside the house ... almost is but to fail.

“Almost a Christian” is going to be the most miserable thing throughout eternity.

I almost surrendered.

I almost did what I was supposed to do.

I almost forsook the world.

I almost loved my neighbor.

I almost loved God with all my heart.

I almost denied myself.

I almost stayed at the post God gave to me.

I heard a testimony of a man that went out preaching, passing out tracts and trying to talk to people for 20 years. Then he decided one day that there ain't nobody who's gonna listen so he quit. Ten years later he went to that same corner he was before and there was a man standing there preaching; he went up to him and said, "You're just wasting your time. I did it 20 years standing on this very corner and nobody listened." The man said, "Right here on this corner? When did you quit?" He said, "Oh 10 years ago." The man said, "You know I was here about ten years ago and there was someone preaching here and talked to me about my soul and that's why I'm here today."

The man gave up.

Almost.

There was no place found for repentance.

I think of the song 'Almost Persuaded' and the last end says: Almost persuaded, harvest has passed, almost persuaded doom comes at last, almost can not avail, almost is but to fail, sad, sad the bitter wail ... almost, but lost.

Decisions we make, choices we make have consequences. We reap what we sow. We reap what we sow.