

Call to Obedience # 421
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Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt.6:33).

by Reimar Schultze

I do not know of any Scripture that has more in it than this passage. This verse stands out like the bright star Sirius, in our nightly sky. It sheds light on all the secrets pertaining to life and godliness, to anything from holiness of heart to the next cup of cold water. This is the promise of Jesus: seek my kingdom first and I will take care of all your needs. Now, how do we get into His kingdom? Following, Jesus gives us four entrance requirements:

1) *...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (John 3:5). **We at once see from this that the kingdom of God is to be entered.** It means that we are not born into it, but born again to enter it, and entering calls for the deliberate engagement of the will. It is a process. God's kingdom was designed to become the dwelling place for every Christian. If he gets into it, all his needs will be met; if not, he will be homeless, wretched and perishing. Man is born again to *enter* into Christ's kingdom.

Please understand that the rebirth is entirely the work of God, but entering into His kingdom is predominantly the work of man. Once we get on our way, Jesus will yoke together with us and get us there to live in it forever. But again, conversion is not the only requirement for kingdom entrance. Following are Jesus' *additional* requirements:

2) *...Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted; and become as little children, ye shall not **enter** into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 18:3). There is no room in Christ's kingdom for pride and self-sufficiency. God has to first slay these traits out of us for us to enter His kingdom. Jesus wants us first to be totally dependent on our heavenly Father even as He was.

3) *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall **enter** the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven* (Matt. 7:21). This tells us that going to church and Bible studies without doing the will of God will exempt us from His kingdom. There is no room for disobedience in His kingdom. If there were, His kingdom would be like the world.

4) *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case **enter** into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5:20). The public righteousness of the Pharisees: Sabbath-keeping, fasting, tithing and evangelism needs exceeding. Jesus basically says, “do this and then go beyond it.” If our outward conduct is not the fruit of an inner transformation, it is a mockery to the triune God.

So, these are Jesus’ entrance requirements for the kingdom of God. They are not to be meddled with. Jesus also tells us the temperament needed for us to enter His kingdom: *...The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force* (Matt. 11:12). This means we need a warrior spirit to get into it, we have to take it by force because the Self, the carnal nature and hell will fight us getting into it unto the death. You can see from this that the kingdom is not handed to us on a silver platter, it is neither for the faint hearted nor the part-timers but for those who out of their love to God will forsake all to go after it.

For Jesus said: *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke 14:33). If we do not forsake all, we are none of His. Jesus wants you in His kingdom. He died for you and ever lives to make intercession for you, to get you into it. That was His primary message: *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom...* (Matt. 4:23). He commanded at His departure: *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come* (Matt. 24:14). There are about 120 references in the Gospels to Christ’s kingdom. The book of Acts ends with these words about Paul: *Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him* (Acts 28:31).

Let us now take a moment to look at the nature of the kingdom of God because it is altogether *other* than anything in the world. Once you enter it, you will become an entirely different species, marching to a different drum altogether. From then on, you will surely be considered a stranger and foreigner in this world. In God’s kingdom: the first are the last, the poor are the rich, the foolish are the wise, the weak are the strong, the empty are the full, the dying are the living, losing is finding, waiting is going, giving is receiving, submission is freedom, the persecuted are the blessed, the meek and lowly are rulers and the highest office is that of a servant.

This is the home Jesus calls every newborn Christian into. This will cause him to *...sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (Eph. 2:6). And all those of such a nature know each other by the twinkle in their eyes and all of them exude the three major marks of kingdom residency: *...righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. 14:17). These are the ever-present fruits of their lives regardless of circumstance. Oh, when the King takes residence in your life, you will crown Him with many crowns!

It is unfortunate that most church people are living outside the kingdom of God. Most have heard little about it or they erroneously believe they are in it though the evidence is lacking. The emphasis is often to get people into the churches instead of into the kingdom. But life is in the kingdom. The church has no power nor heavenly joy without the kingdom. Too many churches are like the Corinthian church - *yet carnal* (worldly) (1 Cor. 3:3) or like the Laodicean church, where we find Jesus being locked out of the church, pleading to come in to establish His kingdom amongst them, saying to her: *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot ...because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. ...knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked* (Rev. 3:16-17). Is it any wonder that the renowned churchman and missionary, E. Stanley Jones, remarked 100 years ago: the church has lost the kingdom?

Now you ask, how do I actually go about entering the kingdom of God? An aircraft pilot only has to know the next three steps at any one time. But the saint only has to know the next step at any time. It is “self-denial.” Jesus said: *...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me* (Luke 9:23). All the requirements Jesus gave us to enter His kingdom will be met in this one obedience: by us taking successive steps of self-denial; and self-denial leads to obeying God. Therefore, self-denial is the missing link in contemporary Christianity. Self has to be denied and crucified because it will never take one step after Jesus. So, self-denial leads to obedience and obedience leads to following Jesus. Following Jesus obviously gets us on our journey towards the gates of the kingdom and everything else. Let us now observe this process beginning at conversion.

The moment a person is born of God, he is no longer his own. Therefore Jesus will take over his life within seconds of his new birth, giving him his first command: Testify! You are to praise the Lord for your conversion. And instantly, Self will rise up and say, “Don’t witness now. You will make a

fool out of yourself; do it later. You will disturb the meeting.” Immediately the warfare begins. Remember, *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force* (Matt. 11:12). If you overcome Self here and obey the Holy Spirit, you will take your first spiritual breath; if not, you will suffocate and die. Remember, once a baby comes out of his mother’s womb, he no longer gets his oxygen from his mother. He must now breathe on his own. Breathing on his own is a matter of life and death. So what breathing is to the body, self-denial is to the Christian. You must begin to deny Self. Then instantly, upon denying Self and obeying the Holy Spirit, you will experience the joy of obedience which is many times greater than the joy of conversion, and it is always fresh as you obey. Next, the Lord may tell you to ask forgiveness of someone, to clean your house of all ungodly materials and so on. Do you get the picture? Every obedience has to be preceded by self-denial. As you go on denying Self at each command of the Lord, you will actually follow Jesus into the gate of His kingdom. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit will be yours. And when you have the kingdom, you have the Holy Spirit and when you have the Holy Spirit, you have the kingdom. The two are inseparable.

In this process, the Holy Spirit will work within you, cleansing, refining and teaching you, revealing the thorns and hidden sins deep in your heart. However if you do not deny Self and crucify Self, you will suffocate and backslide. Finally, you ask how long will it take for me to enter the gates of the kingdom? The answer is: once you are clean and Jesus can run His hand around your heart and find no string attached to anything but Him, you are in.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you. Do it and you are in for a feast.

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