

Call to Obedience #476
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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The Road To Sainthood Is Learning That Losing Is Winning

If you look for one common denominator with the saints of the Bible, it is that they all, at one time or another, looked like losers. So, it will also be true of you, beloved of God, as you pursue the way of the cross. Much of the time you will look like a loser. Let me give you some examples regarding this first from the Bible and then secondly from the world in which you and I live today.

1. Abel was the first one who looked like a loser outside of paradise.

Abel made a great sacrifice to the Lord our God. Consider that at this early time he probably had very few sheep as yet. Therefore, for him to offer his best sheep to God, which you would ordinarily think that he would want to keep for breeding, looked like a foolish choice. Why not take a handful of grain to sacrifice to the Lord as Cain did? But Abel gave exactly what God wanted and it made him look like a loser in the eyes of man, but through it he became the father of all saints. Cain offered as little as he thought he could get by with, and with that he became the father of all backsliders. Think of it, although both worshiped the same God, the one who gave a little became the murderer of the one who gave much. A backslider murdered a saint. That is the tragic beginning of church history. Backsliders were the ones who killed the prophets including Jesus, and of course, they also hinder, choke or destroy everything that God is in.

2. Abraham looked like he was the first loser in man's covenant relationship with God (Gen. 13 & 19). This became most obvious when Abraham and his nephew, Lot, had to split up. Abraham looked like a fool by letting Lot choose the land before them first. Lot chose the green pastures near the city of Sodom, with nice houses and shopping for his wife. Abraham took the rocky lands and lived in tents. Who came out stronger? Who came out the winner? Lot died in shame with no legitimate offspring and Abraham became the father of many nations. Are you willing to live in a tent so that you and your offspring will be blessed forever? Remember the words which Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: *We are fools for Christ's sake...* (1 Cor. 4:10). Volunteer to be a fool for Christ's sake.

3. Moses looked like a loser when he ...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God... (Heb. 11:24-25). Moses left Pharaoh's palace as a prime minister to identify with God's people. He returned to Pharaoh's court as a shepherd, looking like a loser who had nothing but a stick. But who became the winner at the end? Was it the man with the Egyptian army or the man with a stick? Moses is mentioned over 700 times in the Bible and he saw Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; yet Pharaoh's name is never mentioned once in the Bible.

4. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego looked like losers when they refused to accommodate the king's decree to worship his idol (Dan. 3). These three men were thrown into the fiery furnace. Where were the rest of the tens of thousands of Jews who were also there in the dispersion with these three? There should have been tens of thousands of Jews going into the fiery furnace with them. But the other Jews rationalized in their minds saying to themselves: "God knows our hearts; we do not really worship this idol." Oh, what poor souls they were. Jesus says this of them: *For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels* (Luke 9:26). Because they did not want to look like losers, they missed meeting Jesus in the fiery furnace. Most believers today miss what Jesus has for them simply because they refuse to go into the fiery furnaces of life. Remember this, everyone who obeys God and keeps obeying Him will meet and keep Jesus.

Now let us consider people who are living in our world today. Do we have many like Abel, Abraham, Moses, Shadrach, Meshach or Abed-nego who are willing to take the loss that is required to gain all? Consider two men who are working in the factory six days a week. Both are asked to sacrifice Sunday, God's special day when He wants to meet with you to refresh and renew you and your family. My friend, will you respond like Abel or like Cain? Whom will you serve? Isn't God able to help you get another job to continue to worship the one who created you, who died for you, who lives for you and whom you will meet on Judgment Day? What are you sacrificing to the Lord? Yes again, are you willing to take less of this world to gain all in the world to come?

As a whole, compromising fathers beget compromising children. If a father does not put God first consistently at any cost, as soon as his children are old enough, they will most often also abandon the God of the Bible for the gods of this world. You need to have eternity stamped upon your eyeballs and

those of your children, to save yourself and your family from everlasting regret. Remember that “have no other gods,” “keep the Sabbath holy” and “do not commit adultery” were all spoken in the same breath by God.

We must come to grips with the fact that the Ten Commandments, in a sense, are like unto a tree of life that has been planted at the entrance of the new paradise: the kingdom of God, just as it has been a moral guide through time immemorial! It is here where we either decide to be holy or unholy. It is here where we either forsake our life or listen to the devil who says to us as he did to Eve: “Has God said?” He tries to convince us to not take God too literally. It is exactly this point of the commandments being as a tree of life that Jesus places before the rich young ruler who wanted to know how to get eternal life as we see in Luke 18:18-22. It was disobedience to the First and the Tenth Commandments that prevented this ruler from entering the kingdom of God.

The French philosopher, Voltaire, once remarked: “If you get rid of the Christian Sabbath, you will get rid of Christianity.” Getting rid of the Sabbath was attempted during the French Revolution. Nevertheless, the French soon recognized that the Fourth Commandment has a central place in the Christian faith. If we abandon it, we greatly undermine Christianity. The devil wants to take our men out of our churches, out of our pulpits and out of our prayer meetings. We need men to lead, and then our sons and daughters will follow. We should not mind looking like losers now because that goes with the territory of being Christians. It is built into the laws of the kingdom of God: looking like losers. Jesus said that if we lose our life for His sake, we will find it (Matt. 10:39). So, we should keep losing our life. Losing our life, our reputation and the honor of man are stepping stones to finding life abounding and everlasting. I am about to shout.

Another example: when you are a Christian, you will not laugh at the jokes of unbelievers. They may ostracize you and mock you. You may lose a promotion. You will look like a loser. But heaven will smile on you. Your reward is in the mail. Do not feel sorry for yourself. Be happy when men revile you and persecute you. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Going down in the world means you are on your way up with the Lord. Here is yet another example: when you actually start believing the Bible and doing what it says, you become a little bit too happy in church, which is not always socially acceptable. You may be asked to leave. The average church is not used to Christians who live and act like the early apostles.

To sum it all up my dear friend, do you want to look like a winner now and be a loser forever or are you willing to look like a loser now to be a winner forever? You cannot have it both ways. Jesus said: *Woe to you when all men speak well of you. For so did their fathers to the false prophets* (Luke 6:26). Here is a stronger statement: *If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you* (John 15:19). Jesus also said: *It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!* (Matt. 10:25).

If contemporary Christianity means blending in with the world, it ceases to be biblical Christianity, and I want none of it. On this, Paul warns us by saying: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God* (Rom. 12:2).

Get it into your head that being well-liked and popular with man is not your mission. Your mission is to build a bridge between lost humanity and a holy God, even if sinners trample all over you in the process of you trying to get them there. Your calling is not to go higher but to go deeper. And once you go deep enough, you cannot fall anymore. A man on his face before God cannot fall. Try to fit in with the men of Hebrews 11 of whom the world was not worthy and who knew that their battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and wickedness in high places. If you win here, you win everywhere.

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