



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 12:20-26: The Lord Predicts His Coming Death and Resurrection

"Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹ Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

²² Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Background Notes

In verse 20 we read that there were some Greeks among the crowds who came up Jerusalem to worship at the feast. The feast mentioned here is the Passover, so these Greeks would be Gentile proselytes to Judaism. They would be similar to Cornelius (Acts 10). He was a Gentile, but he was a follower of the monotheistic religion of Israel. Both Cornelius and these Greeks realized that the pagan gods of the Greek and Roman religions were not the true God; Israel had the one true God.

"Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." These Greeks wanted to have an interview with the Lord. Perhaps they had seen the recent cleansing of the Temple, when the Lord threw out the corrupt moneychangers from the court of the Gentiles in the Temple area. Maybe it was this event that triggered the response of these Gentiles, and they wanted to have an interview with the Lord. Maybe they wanted to ask Him, "What was that all about?" The Greeks probably came to Philip because he had a Greek name. Philip told Andrew, and together Philip and Andrew told Jesus. It almost seems like the disciples had some kind of screening procedure to protect the Lord from the increasing crowds. Do you remember how the disciples tried to protect the Lord from the parents who brought their children to the Lord, and the Lord rebuked the disciples. "Let them come! Allow the little children to come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The Lord said to "them": "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified"(v23). We don't know whether the "them" addressed here is the Greeks who had come to interview the Lord, or Philip and Andrew, or the whole crowd. We can't be sure. In fact, we really can't be sure whether the Lord ever did speak to individually to these Greek proselytes. Maybe He did, or maybe He spoke to them just as part of the crowd. In any case, the Lord's statement in verse 23 was in response to their request to speak to Jesus.

"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." At first it seems that this response has no connection with the request -- but there is a connection, as you might expect! "The hour" refers to our Lord's death and resurrection. Up until this point in John's Gospel, this "hour" had not arrived. John 7:30: "Therefore they sought

to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come." And John 8:20: "These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come." But now "the hour" had come, and it was through this "hour," the Lord's death and resurrection, that the door would be opened for the gospel to go out to the whole world, including the Gentiles like these Greek proselytes. I believe this is the connection between the request of the Gentile Greeks to interview the Lord and the Lord's response. Perhaps the Greeks had heard that the Lord had previously said to the disciples, "Only go to the lost sheep of Israel," and the Lord knew that's what was troubling them. With the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, "His hour," the gospel would go out to the entire world.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. For Christ, death was the way to life.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain"(v24). The Lord used the natural illustration of how a seed must "die" when it is planted if life is to go on, and if there is going to be any future fruit or harvest. He applied this principle to Himself. He had to die in order for us to receive eternal life – we're the fruit! He had to die because death is the penalty of sin, and we are sinners. If the Lord Jesus had not died, there would have been no harvest. He would have "remained alone," as the illustration portrays. Once again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." Christ was the only person who never sinned, but He gave His perfect life as a sacrifice; He died. Now we can have life if we believe in Him.

As the seed carries the life when it passes through death to the new growth, so the life of Christ has been communicated to believers. As the fruit, we possess divine life, eternal life -- the life of Christ! Do you realize that? If you are a Christian, you not only have forgiveness of sins, you have divine life. Do you have that divine life? What a wonderful illustration we have here, from the way that God designed the plant world. For Christ, death was the way to life.

2. For the Christian, death to self is the way to life.

"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life"(v25). When you become a Christian, you have eternal life and you are on your way to heaven. But what about your earthly life now? Believers still die physically -- but you can make this physical life count forever! That's what verse 25 is all about.

One more time - "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The word for "life" in the first part of this verse is different than the word that is used for "life" at the end of the verse: the last "life" is eternal life, and the word that is used for life in the first part of the verse refers to our physical life.

What does it mean to "lose your life" if you "love your life"? "He who loves his life will lose it." The point is that if your ultimate goal in life is a selfish desire to please yourself and live a life only for your own comfort and pleasure, then you will "lose" your life, as far as any kind of reward in heaven goes. But if you "hate your life," you will keep it. "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will

keep it for eternal life." Now this does not mean we are to hate ourselves or become suicidal! But when we deny our own selfish desires and goals because we love the Lord and His Word, then it appears that we "hate" our own (earthly) lives. We can be sure that there will be reward in heaven, and we have made our temporary earthly lives count **forever!**

Here is an illustration of what I'm trying to say. Right now I am thinking of a foreign missionary who has practiced this principle of "death to self" throughout his life. We went to Sunday school together. Soon after he finished school, he chose to give up what "the good life" in this country has to offer. He went as a missionary to Central America, and he has been on the foreign mission field ever since. He rarely comes back to the USA, and he has very little of what this life has to offer in the way of material possessions and pleasures. He has expended his whole life, largely unknown and "unsung," in service to Christ.

This is the "death to self" principle of Romans 12:1: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* The "death to self" principle is also seen in Galatians 6:14: *"the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* There it is -- the "death to self" principle! That is the key for making your earthly life count for eternal life! As the verse says, *"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life."* For the Christian, death to self is the way to life.

Practical Applications

1. If you had three wishes, what would your first wish be?

The Greeks had a wish: *"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."* That's a great wish, isn't it? In fact, it should be at the top of everyone's "Wish List"! If you had the proverbial "three wishes," what would your first wish be? I hope that our #1 wish would be to see Jesus -- not only to see Him face to face, which is the hope of every believer, but to see more of Jesus in our lives right now, and to know Him better and increase our fellowship with Him. If you had three wishes, what would your first wish be?

2. Let's not "lead the Lord" in our Christian service!

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

This verse is about Christian service. Notice that the Lord **didn't** say, "Where my servant is, there I'll be." No, He said, *"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and **where I am, there My servant will be also**"* (emphasis added).

Do you get the point? **We** shouldn't "**lead the Lord**" in our Christian service -- we should **follow the Lord!** Now, it is true that we have the promise in Hebrews 13:5: *"He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"* The Lord is with us wherever we are. But here we are talking about Christian service, and the key to Christian service is to **follow** the Lord, not **lead** the Lord.

Thirty-five years ago I was working for an electronics company in New England. The company was located not far from Vermont ski country. In fact, I guess that's the real reason why I took the job: I like to ski! But I decided to start a very unique

ministry as a sideline -- to reach skiers for Christ. We bought a ski lodge as our home, and planned to open it as a ski retreat center. We even printed up brochures. But then I began to realize that I was not **following the Lord** in this ministry; **I was leading the Lord** into this ministry! I wasn't totally looking for the will of God, for what **He** had in mind for me for ministry -- I led the Lord into this ministry because **I** like to ski! I was looking for God's stamp of approval on what **I** wanted to do for Him, not necessarily what **He** wanted me to do. We sold the ski lodge, and after several years the Lord clearly led us into the ministry we believe He had in mind for us all along!

Let's not "lead the Lord" in our Christian service!