

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS I

by Lester J. Start

Undated

Text: Matt. 6:33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Intro. G. K. Chesterton illustration of landlady and boarder. Importance of one's philosophy of life, for this determines what one's decisions and goals in life will be.

Especially important is the first principle

The major problem in life is to determine what this first principle shall be. Tragedy of getting emphasis on wrong thing, for life is then a tangle. Thus the importance of first principles.

[Intrinsic aims]

I. The Christian principle - text. This is Jesus' ruling principle. This kingdom is no kingdom in the literal sense; it means loyalty to the higher self, righteousness, dedication to spiritual service. Ideal order of endeavor. [dominant goal]

K of G gives life meaning and direction; provides a blueprint. It makes life out of existence. Deny self, submerge into higher ideal. Life is more than meat. We must see a purpose and goal in our lives and progress toward that ideal. Ill. of gang of laborers on strike. Efficiency experts in industry. Danger of a fragmentary view of life. The need for the proper, inclusive goal. Loyalty to highest values we know and beyond.

K of G is inner compulsion, inner ideal. Lesser aims are meaningless unless brought into relation to the main ideal. Details in life are important but only when taken in relation to the ideal, as the colors on a palette. Text. .

II. ...And his righteousness... Helps explain what we mean by the k. God's righteousness, between man and God, not man and man. Not legalistic agreements which change, but an eternal relationship which is the guide unchanging. There is one standard alone.

Experience shows that men can be civilized yet vile, -nations also. Result of following dominant desires in opposition to God; they break no God's laws, but themselves against them. Then wrong purposes dominate, destruction results and the values disappear.

It makes a great deal of difference what one believes. Ill. by flyers in jungles being helped by savages who once would have taken their heads. Not just education, but Christian principle. Nazis followed wrong values.

We like to think of ideals as unattainable, and excuse shortcomings. Ideal not in the sense of perfect state, but perfect endeavor. Ideal never out of reach, never dependent upon ability.

Seeking K and his righteousness first does not mean we should forget physical needs and desires. They are not opposed as right and wrong but as first and second. We err when we make physical values the treasures of the soul. K of G set above not in opposition in such a way that it gives meaning. Otherwise physical values are destroyed. K of G gives life meaning so that it is more than existence, meat, wealth or sensation.

If we fail to follow the ideal, it is as if sculptors and painters spent all their time on tools and never produced anything, as if scientists spent all their time measuring, forgetting purpose of it all. The humblest life lived in serving God is better than most luxurious existence that is purposeless.

III. . .And all these things shall be added to you. Only when our hearts are on the chief things in life do secondary things yield pleasure. It is possible to have a thing and not have the good of it. It is not the thing but the aroma of the pleasure that is what we desire, as we want a rose for its beauty.

Pleasures are like poppies spread; you seize the flower, its bloom is shed. The poise of the mind is the chief thing - an integrated life-and this is dependent upon loyalty to a first principle.

The true flower of satisfaction is tossed into our laps when we least expect it. Happiness is most likely to be attained when it is not the object of pursuit. Ill. of discovery of penicillin; Acres of diamonds. Ill. of life of toil which finds satisfactions.

Illus. of Aesop's fable of ape and jar of nuts to illustrate danger of sneering at this first principle.

[Matt 6:19 - 33]