

“O TO BE LIKE THEE”

We often sing the beautiful old hymn written in 1897 by T.O. Chisholm, “O To Be Like Thee.” What do we think about when we sing those words? Perhaps we think of the question the Lord put to James and John in Matthew 20 after their mother had requested that her two sons sit on Jesus’ right hand and on his left when He came in His kingdom. Jesus asked them if they were able to drink of the cup He would drink of and be baptized with the baptism He was baptized with. They answered, “:We are able.” When we sing the words to that grand old song, do they stir us up to do the things we must if we are to be like Him?

What does it mean to be like him, anyway? The apostle John would later write: *“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we also in this world”* (1 John 4:17). Paul exhorted the Corinthians to, *“Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1). Eighteen times in the four gospel accounts Jesus is recorded as saying, “Follow me.” What must we do to follow Him? Again, John wrote: *“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself to walk, even as he walked”* (1John 2:6). To put that another way, “O To Be Like Thee.”

If we are to be like Christ, we must do the things that please God. Jesus said: *“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him”* (John 8:29). We must not be like those to whom Jesus posed the question, *“:And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46). Some will be found in that condition in the day of judgment when they hear the tragic words of finality: *“I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity”* (Matt. 7:23). By Jesus own words, there are things to be done to please the Father, and as He did, we must always do those things.

If we are to be like Christ, we must be servants. Jesus did not come to this earth to be ministered unto, but rather to minister and to give His life to ransom men (Matt. 20:28). This statement of Christ is in the context of the request of James’ and John’s mother. In the world’s affairs the lesser serves the greater, but in following Christ the greatest is the one who is the servant of all (vv. 26,27). On the night He was betrayed (John 13), He took a towel and a basin of water and began to wash the disciples feet. In verse fourteen He told these men: *“If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”*

To be like Christ, we must do good. Peter informed those of Cornelius’ house, *“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all those that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him”* (Acts 10:38). To be like Christ, we must not only do good to those we love and who love us in return, but also do good to those who hate us (Matt. 5:44). Furthermore,

to be like Christ we must do that which is good not evil, even to refraining our tongues from evil and our lips from speaking guile (1 Pet. 3:10,11).

To be like Christ, we must teach the will of the Father. Mark 2:13 says: *“And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude came unto him, and he taught them.”* Jesus issued the command to His apostles before His ascension for them to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15). The commission must still be carried out today, for there are still those who are lost and dying in sin without the gospel. Jesus always taught the Father’s will, which means He taught only that which was true. We must teach only the truth or we do not have the Father or the son. If someone else comes to us and brings error, we are not to fellowship that individual (2 John 9-11). Teaching the truth and only the truth was important to Christ, because men’s souls depended upon it; they still do.

If we are to be like Christ, we must be willing to lay down our lives for him and the brethren. In the great tenth chapter of John, Jesus said: *“And the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep”* (V. 15). This One who died for the sheep declared there is no greater love than that which prompts one to lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13). Christ did not die for us in our perfection. We are not, nor will we be, sinlessly perfect. Rather, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). We cannot overlook the preacher Stephen, who took the words of Jesus to heart, preached to those he likely knew would not listen, and gave his life preaching Christ to stiff-necked Jews. Doubtless, remembering the words of the Savior, John wrote: *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”* (1 John 3:16).

Christ was the way He was because even though He was the only begotten son of God, He had an attitude of love, humility, and devotion to the Father’s will. If we are to be like Him, we must have that same mind that was in Him (Phil. 2:5). What we are begins in the heart, *“for out of it are the issues of life”* (Prov., 4:23).

When we sing the words T.O. Chisholm penned over a hundred years ago, let us be conscious of the preceding characteristics of the Savior, as well as the many other aspects of His example. Singing the words of, “O To Be Like Thee,” expresses what we desire to be, what we do reveals whether we are.

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