

MILE MARKER CHRISTIANS

TEXT: *Mt.5:41-48 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

THESIS: To reveal the level of maturity & growth of individual believers.

INTRO.: A. We've all heard about going the 1st & 2nd mile in the Christian life. There are many who go the 1st mile, fewer who go the 2nd mile & even fewer still who go beyond that 2nd mile. Of course many do not even go the 1st mile! Our subject today is **"MILE MARKER CHRISTIANS."** I want you to be 100% honest in your heart today as to which "mile-marker" you have attained.

B. In this message we will include everyone in this room who claims to be saved. No one will be left out. I don't want anyone to **"think more highly of himself"** than he ought to think. Nor do I want you to low-rate yourself. Just be entirely honest. Ask the Holy Spirit right now to help you with this evaluation & ask Him also to help you do whatever is necessary to help you move along to the next level of the Christian life...

I. THE NO MILER: DABBLING

A. The 100 yd. Dash Believer:

1. This person is saved – or at least has made a profession of faith in Christ.
2. This is the so-called saint who shows up on Sunday morning – if everything goes well that week, or if it doesn't inconvenience him or her too much.
3. This is the "Christian" who lives a marginally Christian life, but everyone wonders if they are really saved (I suspect *they* wonder too!).
4. Here is the person who has to be cajoled, coddled & sometimes clobbered in order to get him or her to even do the basics of Bible Christianity.

ILLUS.: If you go to their home you still find the ash tray w/cigarette butts, the same smutty TV programs on their set, their Bible still sitting where they left it last Sunday, they may let some profanity "slip" if they are angry & might even have a bottle or can of beer still in their refrigerator. But if you ask them if they are saved, they will give you a time & place...

5. You might or might not get this person to get into the baptistry, to join the church, to give a dollar each week in the offering, but the chances are good that they will be back into the world in 6 months or a year.
6. This is the crowd who will leave the church at the first sign of trial in their life or the first time they see the Pastor or some other Christian do something to offend them.
- 7.

Mt.13:20-21 *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

I. THE 1ST MILER: DUTY

A. The "Do My Duty" Disciple:

ILLUS.: Under Roman occupation the Jew, by law, had to carry the burdens of a Roman soldier or citizen for one mile. There were severe penalties for those who refused.

The worldly Solomon concluded his book of Ecclesiastes, wisdom from a worldly man's viewpoint w/these words...

Ecc.12:13 *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

1. Here is a rock-bottom, basic, nuts & bolts, summary of the minimal Christian life.
2. **"Fear God"** means fear him like you feared your parents (or should have), i.e., when you did right & obeyed you enjoyed their presence, but when you failed, you feared.
3. **"Keep His commandments"** means do your duty! And you should!!!; this means doing what is in black & white in God's Word.

ILLUS.: Preachers get tired of "Christians" asking how little they should do. They come w/questions like: "Where does it say in the Bible a Christian can't smoke, drink, gamble, go to the movies, rent Hollywood videos, etc....?" "Where does it say mixed bathing is wrong, or women can't dress or wear their hair like men or men or women shouldn't have tatooes? "Where does it say we should have church on Wed. night?"

4. First milers get baptized, come to church w/some regularity, & read a few verses in the Bible on most days & pray for 5 or 10 minutes & may even tithe.

ILLUS.: Tithing predated the Law under Melchizedek, 400+ years before the Law. When the Aaronic Priesthood began God didn't do away w/tithing, but He didn't start it then either. The Aaronic priesthood died when Christ died. In Hebrews we are told that Christ's priesthood is after that of Melchizedek – where tithing started. As believers we are back under the priesthood of Melchizedek, so tithing is still valid, as it was 400+ years before the O.T. law!

5. First milers even occasionally witness & they might be separated enough to not rent "R" rated videos or not even take a "social drink."
6. First milers have a degree of victory in their lives, because as Gen. Montgomery said "Victory is the result of orders being obeyed rather than being discussed."
7. First milers believe in what Mary told the servants "Whatsoever He saith unto you, DO IT." (Not think about it, pray about it, debate it or discuss it, just do it – OBEY!)

TRANS.: There is nothing wrong w/being a First Miler & doing your duty, but there is something better...

II. THE 2ND MILER: DEDICATION

A. The Do-More-Than-Is-Required Christian: (read the text)

1. You don't get to show how good a Christian you are in the first mile because you are dealing w/obligation.
2. There is no sacrifice involved with simple obedience to duty.
3. The 2nd Miler shows not just fear but love & that his service is out of love not just duty.
4. The 2nd Miler shows some sacrifice & goes beyond mere duty.

Mt.5:46-47 *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

NOTE: The Lord is saying that we are no better than the unsaved if we simply do our duty! Even the unsaved obey the law. Even Jehovah's Witnesses stop at red lights. Even Mormons love their families. The 2nd mile is about more than duty. More than keep-commandments. More than mere obedience. More than the letter of the Law. It is about dedication that transcends what is required. The 2nd mile is doing more than what is required or expected. It is about witnessing when no one knows about it. It is taking a meal to a shut in & offering to take him or her someplace that puts you out. It is about sacrifice, & doing more than expected, but still with some limitations.

There is more...Peter gave up his fishing business & followed Christ & even defended Him in the garden of Gethsemane, but when it came to death, he backed off. He chopped off an ear for Jesus, but he also didn't want to be identified w/Him if it might cost him his life. This brings us to the...

III. THE 3RD MILER: DISCIPLESHIP

A. The Sacrificial Saint:

1. The 3rd Miler simply surrenders all.
- 2.

Lk.14:27 *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

Lk.14:33 *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

Mt.10:37 *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

Mk.10:29 *And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,*

1. The 3rd Miler is not just interested in not doing wrong things, but in giving up otherwise good things for Christ.
2. The 3rd Miler is not just interested in avoiding sin, but even the appearance of evil.
3. The 3rd Miler is not just interested in dumping sin, but getting rid of weights.

QUOTE: Corle: "Most of us are so earthly minded that we're racing with lead in our shoes. You've got so many weights on you 'll only make it to the one mile marker. You may fall down before you even reach that far. Even if you make it past the first mile, you are going to be out of breath & fall over on the second mile. It's not the sins but the weights that beset you, the good things that hold you back.

4. Abraham was a 3rd Miler when he left home, family & friends w/out knowing where he was going & when he put his son Isaac on the altar & raised the sacrificial knife. (God didn't want Isaac dead, He wanted Abraham alive - a living sacrifice!)
5. Paul was a 3rd Miler when he said that ***"I could wish myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."* Rom.9:3**
6. The 3rd Miler holds nothing back from the Lord & yields all to Him.

ILLUS.: The Lord may not want all you have or take all you have, he just wants to know that all you have is available to Him! The 3rd Miler yields it all & takes his hand off all his possessions, family, job, & even his life. The 3rd mile sounds like a lonely walk, but it is the mile of discipleship, of daily walking in closest communion w/Christ.

CONCL.: The 1st Miler separates from sin, the 2nd Miler separates from anything even questionable; the 3rd Miler separates even from those good things which may become weights. The 1st Miler tithes, the 2nd Miler gives offerings, the 3rd Miler sacrifices. The 1st Miler witnesses, the 2nd Miler goes soul-winning, the 3rd Miler gives what-ever he has in the pursuit of the lost; leaves friends, family, houses, lands, etc. The 3rd Miler holds nothing back from the Lord. Will you today finish the mile you are on & go to the next level of commitment?!

DABBLING - DUTY - DEDICATION - DISCIPLESHIP --- WHERE ARE YOU ON THIS HIGHWAY?!