**SECOND-MILE LIVING**

(Dan S. Shipley)

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two.” (Matt. 5:41) Under Roman rule it was not unusual for Jews to be pressed into service for the purpose of assisting soldiers and couriers in the performance of their duties. Such tasks were especially distasteful to the Jews. In this passage Jesus pictures one who is obliged to accompany such men, perhaps as a porter, for a distance of one mile. To the proud and reluctant Jew, this must have been a long mile! But now they learn that even after traveling that difficult distance, they were still a mile away from where Christ would have them to be! Hard sayings indeed!

The principle of second-mile service is repeated often in the sermon on the mount. Christ teaches that we are not only not to despair in persecutions, but that we are to “rejoice and be exceedingly glad.” Not only are his followers to be righteous, theirs is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Second-mile service means more than not killing, it means not hating. It means abstaining from adultery and from the lust that leads to it. Second-milers not only do not forswear themselves, they “swear not at all”; they not only forego seeking revenge, they turn the other cheek. The citizens of Christ’s kingdom do not hate their enemies, they love them. For them, a casual seeking of the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it means seeking them FIRST! Faithfulness here is more than being a mere hearer of His word, it means doing it as well. By such standards it is not difficult to see how many of these Jews were a “mile” off in much of their thinking and practice -- and just that far from walking with Christ.

The passing of two thousand years has not diminished the distance nor broadened the way to Christ-pleasing service. While many seek Him at a lesser and more convenient distance, Christ is still found at the two-mile mark. Even among His own, many are yet thinking in terms of “how little can I get by with?” The Lord doesn’t get much mileage from this kind of attitude (usually less than two!). Those who try to “just get by” won’t. None are more deceived than those who seek fellowship with Christ in the near-by areas of half-hearted, lukewarm and begrudged service. He is not there – except in the distorted imaginations of would-be Christians. It is unlikely that their “Lord, Lord’s” will be heard from this remote distance at which they “seek” Him.

The question posed at the Mount is always appropriate for the Christian: “What do ye more than others?” Serving Christ means being more and doing more -- this is the essence of second-mile living -- and this is the dividing line between His true and would-be disciples and the world. Through His word, Christ directs men in the way of second-mile living to a righteousness that exceeds.

Re-read the sermon on the mount. Consider well its lessons. Failure to appreciate and apply these principles of truth could cause us to miss heaven -- we could miss it by a mile!

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