

DATE: November 16, 1969

SUBJECT: RIVETING CHRIST OVER CRISIS

Why don't you grow up? This is often flung as an insult at a person. But in reality this a sage bit of advice. Paul gave two admonitions relative to this. I want us to think about them this morning. He said when I was a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things. There's one fact that stands apart from the rest of life to which there is no exception. That is we all grow up. Cosmotologists have developed quite a line of cosmetics to obscure the fact. But it all washes off. And the fact that a person has matured, has grown older becomes more evident every day. Man has always harbored a dream that somehow he could stop the maturation of his physical body, but he has not yet achieved that plain. It is a dream held in the hearts of man in generations past. Legends grew up about a famous fountain from which one might drink and have eternal youth. Ponce de Leon searched the new world for that fable fountain, the Indian legends told about it. But its never been found. And there's nothing that we can do but grow. It isn't a matter of choice so we needn't be concerned about whether we remain as children longer than we should or whether we grow up into mature years.

But then with our minds its something else. Quite often times through some queer act or fate, through an accident to a child, for one reason or another a child's mind becomes imprisoned in childhood. All of us have known people like that. Its a pathetic thing. The body grows and the mind remains a little child. But the average person develops his mind along with his body and he begins to reach from one level of intellect to another until his mind has expanded to its limits to which he is going to stretch it. Much of that is automatic. There is a range of two extremes where our minds fluctuate and if it isn't a disciplined mind, it will remain on a lower level, if it disciplined it will reach to higher levels. But there is a limit in either direction to which it can naturally go. So Paul isn't speaking about either the mind or the body when he speaks about remaining in childhood. He's speaking at that one point over which we have will over our remaining within childhood or growing into maturity. And that has to do with our emotions and our spirit. It is a sad commentary on any persons life when it is said of him, he just never grew up. And anyone who has had much experience in marriage counseling discovers that in one marriage partner quite often this is the real problem of the home that's breaking up. One of the two members of this marriage alliance has refused to grow up, to take hold of mature thoughts and mature responsibilities that are automatically his, when a home is established.

Many times when there are factions that separate us from other people, factions within churches, we don't have one here, thank goodness, but there are so many churches with factions, splitting up the membership of that church and quite often it over some childish behavior of one person or one group within that church.

Little children are always having disputes and then making up the next day. The tragedy that when an adult remains emotionally immature that he will split up over almost nothing and its almost impossible to cement that relationship back to what it was. And if we are guilty of not having grown up in our emotions, if we are guilty of not having grown up spiritually then this admonition from Paul is a very pregnant idea that ought to lay heavily upon our minds. That until we face up to this responsibility, we cannot achieve this relationship with God that has been promised in the teachings of Christ. If we have not found that satisfaction of fellowship with Christ in all probably it is because we are trying to masticate a childhood religion in a mature world. Its often been said about Christian education that too many of us stop growing intellectually as to our religion in the kindergarten class. As two religious facts, this has been proved too many times. The knowledge of the Bible and the spiritual facts is pathetically low in so many of our church members.

But it is even more pathetic if our religious experience in the realm of stewardship and service remains in the kindergarten stage of our growth and we never discover the true mission of the follower of Jesus Christ. One native physiologist said that the primary purpose of any person's life is to mature. And that a well ordered and a well rounded life is a matter of constant maturing, out through the years that we live. And then he enumerates three things that he says are representative of maturity. The first of these is unselfcenteredness. This is an attribute of childhood. A child is born with only one thing paramount in his mind. And that is to get for myself what I need for my comfort and satisfaction. He can't reason it out, of course, but this is the way it survives. Its very survival is dependant upon the fact that it can get the attention of other people to satisfy its wants and needs. And so a little baby lying in its crib, cries out when its hungry, he cries out when he's thirsty, cries out when he's uncomfortable, demanding the attentinn of people who can satisfy his needs. This is the way that we have been equipped to survive.

But then as the child begins to grow up into mature years, it begins to expand the horizons of his interests. It isn't altogether me and myself, my wants. But naturally he grows up to encompass the needs of other people sharing on higher levels. Family sharing, community sharing, national sharing. And if one grows to such hights, international sharing. This is growing into maturity and unselfcenteredness. But unfortunately for many of us we are trapped in childhood, in our selfcenteredness.

The second thing that this native physiologist says is a mark of maturity is responsibility. A child is born with no responsibility whatsoever. He lies there, he has to do nothing in order to be loved, just simply to exist. It was by no desire no action of his own that brought him into the world, he isn't even responsible for the act of birth itself. He is totally without responsibility. Normal growth brings a sense of responsibility to that child. He learns first of all ~~how~~ to share with his brothers and sisters, he learns to share within the family, to share within the classroom, within the community and so it goes on every one who comes into his sphere of influence must share a part of him until he has fully blossomed out into a fully responsible person. Unfortunately,

there are too many evidences of irresponsibility in otherwise mature individuals. That which is happening throughout America in ghettos, in the darkened parts of the city, crime running rampant, racial violence springing up with little provocation. This is evident of only one thing, irresponsibility. The fact that a planned march on Washington to antagonize to create discord, to project problems, to magnify the problems that are already there. This is one of the objectives of one of the minority groups in our nations, I declare it as nothing more than irresponsibility of leaders trying to achieve a nobler purpose but doing it irresponsibly. To deliberately cause feelings to flare up between groups of people, between individuals, in order to gain one object is not a mark of maturity, is not a mark of responsibility. The same thing comes about in the outcry about Vietnam. Dr. Spock may know what its all about in taking care of little babies. But Dr. Spock has offered no reasonable alternative to whats happening in Vietnam.

Chaplain Henry Sloan Coffin, Jr. may know what it is to counsel with Yale University students. But when he demonstrates about whats happening in Vietnam without ~~making~~ offering a reasonable alternative in both instances, it is a matter of irresponsibility. We are undermining the confidence ~~of~~ about whats being done without offering an alternative toward which we can move. This is so whats so deadening about descent. Descent has value only when theres an alternative offered to that which you have heard. Otherwise you destroy the very foundation that support your rights to search for better ways.

Its happening within the freedom movements, within the moral realm, within the intellectual realm. Once again its irresponsibility because there's an absence of an alternative. Christian maturity is that level to which a person comes when to descent means to offer an alternative. And so a mark of maturity, is responsibility.

The third mark of maturity is integration. And of course, I'm not speaking here about bringing the two races of people together. I'm speaking about an integration of factors ~~that~~ make up the whole of a persons experience. A little child flits from one interest to another, we all know how that comes about. You can hold there attention for a very short span of time until there off on something else. There's is a fragmented life. It is not yet fitted itself into the total pattern that it is meant to be. The mark of maturity is when a man can group his life into a pattern. Inegrate the facets of his life into the whole. Giving priority to that which is most important and keeping on a subserviant level that which does not rank in importance. Immaturity is where its a jumbled thing and we are on tangent after another, out for kicks, trying to experience this and then that. Bearding upon one interest, loosing interst, and hunting for something else to hold our attention. Have you ever seen a little child put a jigsaw puzzle together. He'll find a piece and he'll try to fit it but there's not place for it to fit but he'll just keep putting it around at any place where it might join on to the others. It has no meaning at all.

But if a man is mature he'll search for a place where the colors match and the shapes match and then it drops beautifully into place. A mature life is an integrated life.

Now I'm quoting from a physiologist here, one who studies human nature, one who studies life and he says these three attributes are the mark of maturity. Paul said let us grow up. But that's only one admonition. The second admonition is this. Grow up into Christ. We've talked about what it means to be mature, but maturity isn't enough. A spiritual maturity, grow up into Christ. Let's look at them again.

Unselfcenteredness. What did Christ have to say about the person in the world. Well for one thing he said unless you are willing to lose your life, you cannot save it. He said greater love hath no man than this than that a man lay down his life for his friend. By example he said, ~~not my will~~ be willing to say, not my will but thine be done. Now this isn't a simple achievement. Everything within us cries out to preserve self, to enhance self, to tower above the needs and the rights of other people. That's what our bodies cry out in order to find satisfaction. But it's antithetical to what Christ teaches us as is necessary for spiritual maturity. ~~The~~ To lose ourselves to a greater and a nobler cause. To be willing to die for the greater of humanity. We die in many ways but perhaps that place to which we are called to die is in self interest. For when our own self interest stands in the way of that which is best for others we need to learn how to sacrifice. A whole philosophy ~~is built upon that~~ of community living is built upon that.

Matthew Henry, a professor at Oxford, said that scientific religion is simply a matter of this, ourselves this is not ourselves. And a mature Christian simply cannot say, what's in it for me. That is not the motive by which he lives. Responsibility, this is one of the great vacuums in what otherwise would be full and normal lives. Few things distress me more than to meet a person who cannot be depended upon. For it to be said about a man that a word is his bond, is the highest accolade that one can bestow. In order to put a responsibility upon a person and then rest assured that it will be done, but how many of us are irresponsible, cannot be depended upon. Jesus dissuaded that in the mind of any person who wanted to become a Christian and he said ~~he~~ if you don't mean business about this problem of discipleship then don't even come in the first place. For he said this, one who has put his hands to the plow and then looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God. Integration, Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the nucleus of life, about him life revolves. When we seek first the kingdom of God, seek to integrate it into our lives and into the experience of our lives, we find everything falling into its proper place. This isn't an act of magic, it is a promise of God and it has been proved many times over by people who first seek the priorities of life only to find the other things falling into place. Jesus said, God takes care of you for look at the flowers as they bloom in all their splendor in the fields. Look at the birds as they sail through the air. These have no

concept of creating for themselves, they are dependent upon God to take care of them and then he said, if we are not dependent to rely equally upon God, it is simply a matter of little faith. For God ~~we~~ wants our lives to fit into a pattern; he asks only that we put the priority where they belong. If somehow you had become in childhood, inselfcenteredness, irresponsibility, in descentegration, Paul has given us the charge to ~~cause~~ cause us to rise up to build and to become.

And now this. God has placed us in a big pair of boots. And he said "fill" grow up until they fit. And after everything else has been said, thats really what life is all about.

Let us pray.