

# Settle In Your Hearts

## A Sermon by Rev. Donald L. Rose

"Settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist" (Luke 21:14,15).

The Lord said these things to followers who were later persecuted and brought before councils. Their accusers thought by confronting them they could weaken the cause of Christianity. But it turned out differently. Those confrontations became opportunities for the strengthening and growth of Christianity.

The boldness and eloquence of the disciples, although they were just fishermen, was nothing short of astonishing. Of one outspoken disciple it is said, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke" (Acts 6: 10). In the 4th chapter of Acts we read of two disciples who were confronted: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled" (Acts 4:13). (King James Version says "unlearned and ignorant men.") They had a boldness and assurance, and their answers were powerful.

They were somehow triumphant even when they were beaten and imprisoned, and in some cases put to death (see Luke 21:16). We will mention one example of that in a moment.

The text applies of course to us and, we might say, in a much less dramatic fashion. We will not likely be brought before courts and kings nor openly challenged and assailed by enemies.

But we do stand to be attacked by the enemies of our spiritual life. And the more we learn about the assaults of evil spirits on followers of the Lord, the more do we see that it too is dramatic and momentous. Falsities from hell itself assail the person who is being tempted, and the Writings say that to every falsity the hells inject, there is an answer from the Divine.

What we experience in temptation is anxiety, discouragement even to despair. We do not know that evil spirits from hell are fighting against us, nor do we know that the Lord is fighting for us, and the answers from

the Divine to the false accusations and undermining thoughts do not come clearly to our consciousness. Here is what the Writings say: "As regards temptations.. the hells fight against man, and the Lord for man; to every falsity the hells inject, there is an answer from the Divine .... The answer from the Divine flows into the internal or spiritual man.. and in such a manner that it scarcely comes to the perception otherwise than as hope and consequent consolation, in which there are nevertheless innumerable things of which the man is ignorant" (AC 8159:3). (In that answer which we feel only as hope and comfort there are countless blessings that the person has no knowledge of"--new translation.)

Here is the context of the words of the text: "...they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.. [N]ot a hair of your head shall be lost. In your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:12-19).

The very first Christian to die for his beliefs found that the confrontation was indeed an occasion for testimony. He was falsely accused and brought before a council to answer. His eloquent speech takes up the whole of the 7th chapter of the book of Acts. It is said, "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.. [T]hey cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord and they cast them out of the city and stoned him" (Acts 7:54,57).

That speech which so affected them had begun thus: "...brethren...listen: the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham" and he told the story through Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Solomon, and when he was finished he gazed up into heaven and saw the glory of God. And as they rained stones on him he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' and 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this he fell asleep" (Acts 7:2,59,60). It is said that those who looked at him "saw his face as the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15).

A radiant peace surrounded him. The Lord had promised that nothing would harm them. They were at peace even in death.

"Settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer." Think deliberately about the future, and think of how not to think of the future. In one of the Lord's parables a man is called foolish because he did not think ahead intelligently. "Foolish one, tonight your soul will be required of you, and then whose will those things be which you have provided?"

Oh, he had thought and meditated within himself about the future. But what was the level of his thinking? To quote the Gospel: "And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do? ... I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater.. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years ..." (Luke 12:17-21).

He could look down the road years ahead. He could figure out what he was going to do, and what he was going to say, and God called him a fool. How does our future look to us? How much strength and endurance do you have for what lies in store for you? Can you handle what is yet to come? Do you have the wit? Will you have the wit to respond to what may come to pass?

We live in the illusion that our strength, our intelligence, our very life is from ourselves. How big is our reservoir of energy or endurance or prudence? Since it seems that life is our own, we think in terms of calling on our reserves. Once the disciples set off in a boat on a journey with the Lord. And it had slipped their mind that they should have stored some provision. To quote from the Gospel of Mark, "Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat" (8:14). That was what was on their mind, and the Lord said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? ...do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up? How is it that you do not understand?"

He got them to answer the question, and He could ask them on a much later occasion, "When I sent you without money bag, sack and sandals, did you lack anything? So they answered, Nothing" (Luke 22:35). Think of the uncertain times of youth that you have passed through. You made it through your teens. Has the Lord kept you safe thus far? Has He provided?

It is too bad that some people have concluded that it is virtuous not to make provision for the future. It's understandable. The Lord has given

us the message that He will provide. Seek the kingdom of God, and these things will be added to you. But the Writings say this does not mean we should not provide ourselves with food, clothing, "and even resources for the time to come; for it is not contrary to order for anyone to be provident for himself and his own." The new translation speaks of "resources for the future; for it is not contrary to order to make provision for oneself and one's dependents" (J. Elliott's translation).

But there is the matter of putting trust in the Divine. Notice the verb *tribuo*, something you do. It is translated to "attribute" or to "ascribe." See how it is used in this teaching about charity in a person engaged in business. "He thinks of the morrow, and yet does not think of it. He thinks of what should be done on the morrow, and how it should be done; and yet does not think of the morrow, because he ascribes the future to the Divine Providence and not to his own prudence." And then it adds, "Even his prudence he ascribes to the Divine Providence" (Charity 167).

Does that fortunate person who ascribes the future to the Divine just do this at one point in life? Or is it not something to be done deliberately through the progressing stages of life?

Settle it in your hearts. Deliberately ascribe the future to the Lord's Providence, and do so, if you can, until you can feel a sense of relief as if someone had removed a false burden from you.

Do not think of this merely as "either/or," as if to say, either you trust in Divine Providence or you do not. It can be a quantitative thing. Some attribute a little bit to the Divine Providence and a lot to themselves (see AC 2694:2). The Writings use the phrase "the more": the more they ascribe, the stronger or wiser they are (see AC 4932). In our lives we gradually come to ascribe more to the Lord and less to ourselves (see TCR 610 and 105).

The disciples were to learn that peace, the wonderful prize of peace, is to be found in the Lord Himself. He said, "These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (Luke 16e). *En to cosmo thlipsin exete alla tharsete--In the world you will have affliction, trouble, but take heart. Have courage. I have defeated. I have conquered. I have overcome the world.*

Our picture of the future can become less a matter of speculation and worry and more and more a picture of the Lord as one in whom to confide and one who grants peace. Peace has in it confidence in the Lord that He will provide, and that He leads to a good end. "When someone is in this faith, he is in peace, for he then fears nothing and no solicitude about future things disquiets him" (AC 8455).

We sometimes say that the future looks dark. And the unknown is a kind of darkness. But when we ascribe the future to the Lord, we may say at any time in history or at any stage of our life, that the future has light in it, being in the hands of Him who is the light of the world.

Settle it in your hearts anew today. Ascribe the future to the Lord. And He will give you what to think and do, and He will give you peace.  
Amen.

*Lessons: Matt. 10:16-31, DP 179, AC 2493*