

February 12, 2020

Denying Worldliness

In last week's meditation, we learned that some activities become worldly when our attitude towards that activity results in decisions that place the activity ahead of God. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" If we are to live godly in this present world, we must learn to deny ungodly and worldly lusts.

Ungodliness speaks of wickedness. Worldly refers to the things of this world and our desires for them as defined in I John 2:15-17. We are to deny any wicked thing that appeals to the lust of our flesh, the lust of our eyes or the pride of life. The key, however, is in the word denying. What does it mean to deny worldliness? The Greek word for deny means to disavow, reject, abnegate, or refuse. Webster in his 1828 dictionary defines deny as "not to afford or yield... to decline the gratification of appetites or desires; to refrain from; to abstain." Saying no to the flesh is not easy. It requires a great deal of spiritual discernment and strength which can only come from God. Perhaps the best way to help us understand what it means to deny worldliness is to consider two historical examples.

In 1923, Eric Liddell, a Scotsman, won the 100, the 220, and 440 yard races all in the same day to qualify for the 1924 Olympics in Paris as part of Great Britain's Olympic team. The 100 meter race was one of the most important track events of the Olympics and Eric was one of the favorites to win. Eric bore the hopes, not only of Scotland, but of all Great Britain. When the Olympic schedule was released in January 1924, it was discovered that the heat races for the 100 would be held on Sunday, July 6. Despite great public pressure, Eric refused to race on the Lord's Day, choosing instead to focus on the 200 and the 400 meter races. As a sprinter, Eric was considered one of the favorites in the 200, but not the longer 400. On Wednesday, July 9, Eric won the gold in the 200. On Friday, July 11, Eric was back on the track where he won the 400 as well. Almost a year later, June 27, 1925, Eric won the 100, the 220, and the 440 yard races at the Scottish AAA Championship, considered a showcase for the 1928 Olympic games. But to the great disappointment of Scotland and all of Great Britain, Eric would not be participating in the 1928 Olympics. A week after his final race, Eric was on his way to China to serve the Lord as a missionary.

In 1883, at the young age of 20, Billy Sunday became a member of the famed Chicago White Sox baseball team. He was one of the speediest base runners and the most daring base stealer in all of baseball. Four years later, in 1887, Billy came to know Christ as his personal savior. While he continued to play professional baseball, he refused to play on Sunday. Four years later, in March 1891, Billy Sunday left professional baseball to become a full-time evangelist for his Lord.

Both men were gifted, successful and loved their sport. They were well known and well respected. Both faced extreme pressure and opposition for refusing to participate in sports on the Lord's Day, choosing instead to honor the Lord. As a result, they became choice vessels in the work of the Lord and impacted thousands for Christ. You can read more about these great men of faith by checking out their biographies in our youth library.