



I'd Rather Have Jesus



"I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands;
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

"I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame;
I'd rather be true to His holy name.

"He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom;
He's sweeter than honey from out the comb;
He's all that my hungering spirit needs,
I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead.

"Than to be the king of a vast domain,
or be held in sin's dread sway;
I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today."

"For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."- Philippians 1:21

"Bless the Lord ...who satisfies your years with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle." - Psalm 103:5

Those of us who are in our later years have the advantage of looking back on the course of our lives and God's faithfulness through those many years. This gives us the ability to focus more on the things that really matter, as we clearly see that relationships with family and friends are of much more value than the riches of this world. As our physical strength wanes, we can find that our inner person is being renewed day by day as we find our satisfaction in the Lord (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

"I'd Rather Have Jesus" was written by George Beverly Shea, who ministered with Billy Graham in his crusades from 1944 until 2008. "Bev" Shea became known as "America's Beloved Gospel Singer," although he was Canadian by birth, and he joyfully carried the Gospel in song to every continent and every state in the Union during his long life.

George grew up in a Christian home, often using his fine singing voice in the Methodist church where his father was a minister. He had to drop out of college due to the financial needs of his family, but he continued to sing in churches and on Christian radio programs. Unexpectedly, he was offered an audition for a secular singing

position in New York City and passed the test. This opportunity came with a substantial salary and fame, but he needed to decide between a secular job and ministry.

One Sunday, George went to his piano to prepare a song for the morning service, and found a poem left there by his mother entitled, "I'd Rather Have Jesus." He immediately composed music for the lines and sang the song that same day, and he continued singing it all through the years to come. Bev allowed the message of this text to guide him wisely to a wonderfully productive and worthwhile life of service to Christ as he shared his musical "theme song" with audiences around the world.

Life is full of choices, and Jesus gives us the best example to follow at those moments. In Matthew 3 and Luke 4, we read of three temptations put before Him by Satan. Jesus was hungry and weary after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, but he countered each temptation by quoting Scripture.

In Luke 4:5 we see that the devil led Jesus to a high place where he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world "in a moment of time." Then he offered to give Him all that domain and its glory, for it was his to give to whomever he wished. But Jesus answered him, "It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only."

Paul describes unbelievers in Ephesians 2:2 as those who walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." And we read in 1 John 5:19, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." That's the bad news, but the good news follows:

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

That would have made a fine ending for John's first epistle, but he adds one more short verse: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." John contrasts the term "idols" with "the true God" of verse 20. The false teachers of his day held the philosophy of the world as superior to God's revelation, convincing believers to turn from the fundamentals of the faith. Christians then and now need to guard themselves from the lies of Satan and cling to the truth of God's Word, which is to be treasured far more than anything the world has to offer.

May we turn from the idols of this world more and more each day, by God's grace, and sing from our hearts with Bev Shea, "I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today."