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Let God of the Blimp

Holding on to this world's "riches" is much too costly.

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Always let go of a blimp before it gets too far off the ground," John Jensen* set this rule for operating his airship Horizon. The former aerospace engineer mortgaged his house for the \$300,000 blimp, and devoted his life to it. He believed he could build a successful business around it.

Blimps are safe to fly, but tricky to land. Jensen and his crew were trying to moor the airship at the Hayward Air Terminal, when they lost control.

Jensen was holding on to the outside rails of the gondola, as the craft shot up. Ten feet . . . 20 . . . 30 . . . he kept holding on. Sixty . . . 80 feet . . . now it was too late to let go. At 200 feet, he could no longer hold on, and plunged to his death before his horrified crew and family.

Why had Jensen ignored one of his own safety rules? His senior crew chief commented, "He put his entire life into that airship—it was something that meant so much to him he didn't want to let go."

Let Go to Avoid Loss

Are we tempted to hold on to something that means so much to us, even when it puts us in danger? The rich young ruler wanted eternal life, but he sorrowfully refused to let go of his wealth to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:16-22). Many things we hold on to hinder our relationship with God. Perhaps we nourish ambitions that are not in God's will. A position, possession or person that is treasured above God, His Word and His will for us will shrivel our spiritual commitment.

Our agenda may simply be too full to respond to God's invitation. In the parable of a great banquet, Jesus tells of three men who rejected the king's invitation because they wouldn't let go of their plans. One had to inspect a piece of real estate. Another had to check out newly acquired oxen. And a third had just married. (See Luke 14:16-20.)

If God is to be Lord of our lives, He must have priority. Unwillingness to let go of secondary concerns leads to tragic loss.

Let Go to Receive Forgiveness

The worst mistake is clinging to our "goodness." We compare ourselves favorably with our neighbors and coworkers, and believe that we are acceptable to God because we consider by comparison we are pretty good, after all. But God's Word declares, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

Saul of Tarsus tried to make himself good enough for God through meticulous observance of Jewish religious laws, and he either truly believed he was or he pretended he was because of his misguided defense of "pure" Judaism. Later known as Paul, he finally discovered that only because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross could he be forgiven by God. The work necessary for his forgiveness had already been done. All he had to do was let go of his personal "blimp"—his own self-righteousness. He recognized he did not have a righteousness of his own "that comes from the law." He discovered instead that any righteousness he might possess was "that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

Paul found that letting go leads to forgiveness, relationship with God, and eternal life. When we hold on tightly to our earthly treasures, we lose everything.

*Name changed • Scriptures are from the New International Version.