

The Grace of Self-denial

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Acts 20:35

Every loving parent will agree with the sentiment of the verse for today.

Every loving spouse will also agree with this verse for today.

There is a special pleasure that comes from taking from what is yours and using it to give something to the person(s) you love.

As I was accompanying my wife as she shopped in a ladies clothing store, the wife ahead of us was boasting about her husband and how he would buy her anything she wanted. The sales lady responded that she would like to borrow the customer's husband for a few hours!

It is very sad when a partner in a relationship is unwilling to give to their spouse. One of the best signs of true love is that it is most interested in giving and not in receiving.

When a young man enters a relationship with a young lady just to get at the family fortune, we know he is in love with himself and not the young lady.

Over and over again in Scripture we read of God's love for sinners and there is often mention of the sacrifice that Christ made to redeem us.

Paul in Galatians 2:20 says of Christ that He "loved me and gave

himself for me."

The most beloved verse in all of Scripture and the one that some sports fans hold up on large cards at sporting events is John 3:16 where it is said of God,

"For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

God has made the ultimate sacrifice of His Son in order to redeem us, and the fact He would sacrifice His Son in Whom He is well pleased demonstrates the degree of love God has for us.

This brings us to the highly personal application of our verse for today.

Ask yourself how much you love God. What are you willing to give up in order to serve the Lord faithfully? Would you give up the blessings of western society in order to live in poverty with the people of a third world country and minister to their material and spiritual needs?

Are you willing to see yourself separated from your beloved child in order for that child to serve the Lord and His people in a distant place? Or would you sacrifice your own comforts in order to take a low paying job away from your own family just so that others would benefit from your presence?

How many opportunities for effective Christian service have been lost because of someone being unwilling to reduce their ties with family and/or economic prosperity?

If we as Christians really believed in eternity and heaven, can we be blind to the short time here compared to eternity? Can we not see that we shall spend all of eternity in heaven with our Christian family so sacrificing time with them here is not a great sacrifice at all?

What do you and I really know about the grace of self-denial and the blessing of giving over that of receiving? Perhaps we may need to rethink what we believe and what is most important.

Sadly, some Christians insist on serving their own desires first in this life and cross their fingers in the vain hope that God is not looking. It is sometimes true that the more we have, the more selfish we become.

Selfish ambitions guarantee failure and unhappiness in the long run. It is only by losing ourselves in service to others that we truly gain.

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