

In a Word: Self-Sacrifice

Introduction

- When defining the word “sacrifice”, we’ll find that it carries many meanings throughout the bible.
 - For this lesson, the term “self-sacrifice” may be better suited.
 - You won’t find the hyphenated word “self-sacrifice” within the actual biblical text.
 - What you will find, is that it is spoken of time and time again.
- Self-sacrifice defined:
 - Giving up of one’s own interests or wishes in order to help others or advance a cause.
 - Giving up what you want so that other people can have what they want or need.
- What does “self-sacrifice” mean for modern-day Christians?

I. A Biblical Example of Self-Sacrifice

- a. There can be no better example than that of the poor widow:

(1) And He (Jesus) looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, (2) and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. (3) So He said, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; (4) for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.” (Luke 21:1–4; Mark 12:41-44)

- i. We don’t want to concentrate our thoughts on the offering itself. But the attitude of self-sacrifice demonstrated by the poor widow.
- b. Jesus saw the rich and the poor.
 - i. The rich – “for they all put in out of their abundance” (Mark 12:44)
 - ii. The poor widow – “she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had”.
 - iii. The two copper coins, (mites KJV) were the smallest denomination of money.
 - iv. As humans, we see the amount but Jesus sees the proportion.
 - v. Bible scholars say that this was not a mandatory offering (like the temple tax) but was a free-will offering. They also say that it would be known how much each person was giving, how would we like that?
 - vi. The rich may have been practicing the tithe, 10 percent. Yet the widow gave 100%.
- c. Forbes says two thirds of the billionaires have given less than 5% of their fortune to charity. Most around 2.5%.
 - i. The value of a gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver.
- d. Would we criticize the widow for her irresponsibility? For not saving for a rainy day?
 - i. We preach that we are to be responsible, caring for our selves and our families...

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

- ii. The widow now had 2 choices, become dependent up on the state for her support or go home, starve and die.

Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matthew 6:30)

- e. But what she demonstrated was a complete dependance upon God for her well-being.

II. A Refusal of Self-Sacrifice

- a. On the other side of this discussion, we see the Rich Young Ruler. (Matt. 16:19-22; LK 18:18-23)

(17) Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (18) So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. (19) You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ” (20) And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” (21) Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (22) But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:17–22)

- b. The question asked, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Notice Jesus’ answer...
 - i. Do you know God’s commandments? Yes
 - ii. Then there is one more thing...

“You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Luke 18:22)

- iii. Jesus demands that the young man demonstrate the attitude of the poor widow.
 - 1. Give “all”, “everything” that you have. Complete self-denial!
- c. The young man’s decision:

But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:22)

- d. In the following verses, Jesus discusses the problem with His disciples.

(23) Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (24) And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! (Mark 10:23–24)

- e. Riches = Money, houses, cars, recreational vehicles, electronics, and time.

(26) And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” (27) But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.” (Mark 10:26–27)

- f. We don’t know what happen to that young man, but we do know that he turned down eternity.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him... (Hebrews 2:3)

III. The Requirement of Self-Sacrifice

- a. First, let’s remind ourselves of the definition of self-sacrifice:
 - i. “Giving up what you want so that other people can have what they want or need.”
- b. Self-sacrifice must be motivated by love...

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

- c. One of the most common questions I am asked is, “How much should I give to the Lord?”

Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? (Galatians 4:16)

- i. In the past I have tried to use scripture such as 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 to explain that it is a matter of the heart.
- ii. That’s the correct answer, but not the only one. The next time someone asks I will say, “All of it”. 100%
- d. The truth is we are only giving God a fraction of our livelihood, a fraction of our lives.
 - i. We give the excess, the leftovers, the part that we’re not using.
 - ii. I feel good when I go to the closet and stuff all those old clothes in a bag...
- e. In the Old Testament...
 - i. It was to be the first of the crops, the best of the herd, and to do otherwise was to defile the sacrifice to God.

‘The table of the LORD is contemptible.’ (8) And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil? (Malachi 1:7–8)

- ii. We are to give/sacrifice the very best in our service to God.
- f. **Time**, if there is anything we rob from God, it is our time.
 - i. Remember, our lesson from the poor widow is about proportion.
 - ii. How much of my time do I really give to the Lord?
 - iii. Do I sacrifice my time or does God get the leftovers?

- iv. Do I say, “Lord, I’ll serve you unless I’m on vacation, or the kids have a ball game, or unless Uncle Joe and Aunt Sally come to visit.”
- v. God doesn’t want our leftover time.
- g. The poor widow trusted in God when she gave it all, while the rich young ruler chose his own desire.
 - i. Will I trust Him enough to sacrifice myself, my wants, my desires for the cause of Christ?

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (Luke 9:23)

- h. God wants a living, breathing, sacrifice from me...

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (spiritual worship). (Romans 12:1)

(15) Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (16) But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 13:15–16)

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