

Giving Up For The Lord

Introduction. On January 13, 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the Potomac. Ice on the wings prevented the plane from having a successful takeoff, and 78 people perished. The five people that survived struggled in the icy river as rescuers tried to reach them. Five times a helicopter dropped a rope to save Arland D. Williams Jr. Five times Williams passed the rope to other passengers in worse shape than he. When the rope was extended to Williams the sixth time, he was too weak to take hold and succumbed to the frigid waters. His heroism was not rash. Aware that his own strength was fading, he deliberately handed hope to someone else over the space of several minutes.

Life is full of choices, some of which are not very easy to make. In being Christians, there are certainly times when doing what is right requires not doing (or sometimes not having) some other alternative. When we face such choices, we should not try to figure how to have it both ways. The fact is, we should be willing to sacrifice for the Lord.

We are going to study the concept of sacrifice, and try to get a fresh understanding of the vital, crucial notion of letting go of objectives and activities that hinder our full dedication to the Lord and His work.

I. ***Sacrifice Is Denial***

A. Matthew 16:24-26.

1. We have to make a choice between the Lord and the world. "Deny" is to refrain from satisfying one's own interests and needs. It means we are willing to forgo our own comfort, preferences, schedule, and desires for another's benefit. But being unselfish strikes at the very core of our being.
2. "Profit" means benefit (1 Timothy 4:8; Titus 3:8). To gain the whole world means to possess it as our own. One will always come out a loser if the conquest involves giving up the higher, spiritual life.

B. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

1. We will be willing to sacrifice anything we have for the Lord if we, like the Macedonians, have made the conscious decision to first give ourselves to Him.
2. The Macedonians had the perfect excuse to avoid helping their brethren, but they excelled in their giving, just like Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:15).

C. Luke 18:18-23.

1. We cannot serve Christ if what we possess means too much to us (Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:15). What did the rich young ruler lack in order to serve the Lord?

2. John Wesley observed that self-denial of all kinds is the very life and soul of godliness. We have to guard against developing the same attitude as the rich young ruler (Proverbs 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:12).

II. ***Sacrifice Should Cost Us Something***

- A. What we give to the Lord should “cost” us something. In spite of Araunah trying to be so generous with the gifts for the altar, David knew the reality of sacrifices costing something (2 Samuel 24:18-25).
- B. Sacrifice is an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy (1 Kings 17:8-16; Philippians 3:7-8). Part of our sacrifice to God today involves the fruit of our lips, emanating in praise, encouragement, and comfort (Proverbs 12:12-14; Hosea 14:2; Hebrews 13:15).
- C. Festo Kivengere said, “The love of Christ was demonstrated through suffering, and those who experience that love can never put it into practice without some cost.” In a world where success is the measure and justification of everything, the figure of Him who was sentenced and crucified remains a stranger (Philippians 2:5-11).

III. ***Sacrifice Means Receiving Something Much Better***

- A. We never give up anything for the Lord without receiving something better in return (Mark 10:28-31). You have got to decide how badly you want eternal life and then sacrifice accordingly.
 1. Young people may have to give up dancing or immodest clothing to maintain their righteous witness before the world (Matthew 18:8; Galatians 5:24).
 2. Older people in established careers may have to give up occupations or advancement in order to remain devoted to Christ (Luke 6:22; Hebrews 11:24).
- B. It takes great faith to believe in something beautiful and eternal beyond the rewards of this life. If you are willing to joyfully surrender what the world chases after, although you may be “last,” you will be “first” (Proverbs 12:17-22). Gandhi said, “No sacrifice is worth the name unless it is a joy. Sacrifice and a long face go ill together.”

Conclusion. Someone has said that the good is often the enemy of the best. Receiving the best (heaven) requires a willingness to sacrifice what is merely good (this world’s pleasures).

Because we live in a bountiful society, surrounded by so many good blessings, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we have a right to have and do all that we want, and that there must be some kind of way to have it all and do it all without hurting our spiritual priorities. Such is not the

case, however. There is simply too much out there. No Christian can have everything and do everything, and still have the resources left over that the Lord's work deserves. Some choices have to be made. Some objectives and actions have to be let go.

Jesus did not rashly give His life for us. Being a sacrifice for us was His destiny from all of eternity. He deliberately left heaven and came to earth with the express intention of dying. We need only take the lifeline handed to us to be saved by His sacrificial death on the cross.