

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that you are waking up in the morning to a new day. You've just opened your eyes and regained consciousness and begin to think about your day. What is it that you dread? What makes you want to go back to sleep? Going to work? Having to deal with that project manager who is a complete moron and requires you to do the most mundane and worthless tasks? Ok, how about what gives you consolation? What do you look forward to during the day? Alright, let's zoom way out and think about the bigger picture. What do you look forward to accomplishing in the next week? How about the next few months? What projects do you have going that you would like to finish over the next few years? Ok, now how about this; what would you like to accomplish before you die?

We are a purpose driven people, even if most of us don't realize it. Often we go through long periods of time without evaluating our purpose. Without checks, our purposes often degenerate to simple selfish subconscious purposes like, "Will this increase my reputation?" or "Will this make my work less; make my life easier or more comfortable?" How about "Will this keep people from yelling at me?"

When we are faced with a hard task we need to have a real purpose to help us deny the flesh. Satan's tactic is often subtlety; gradually shifting purpose in our life from the Kingdom to the most absurd.

Sacrifice without purpose is impotent.

TRANSITION TO TEXT

Today we're reading a passage of Scripture in which Jesus asks us to do the hard things; in fact, He requires this for being His disciple. He asks us to deny ourself, pick up our cross daily, and follow Him.

TEXT Luke 9:22-27

Here we find Jesus just finishing a long sermon to a large crowd with His disciples gathered around. Afterwards, He asks His disciples who the people say He is, then asks who His disciples think He is. Peter responds with "The Christ, The Holy One of God." Our passage begins in verse 22.

[Jesus was] 22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."

Now an interesting point here is that two of the other Gospels tell us that Peter, who just declared Jesus the Christ, "took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." to which Jesus tells Peter to, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

And here we find Jesus expound on this hard task of setting one's mind on the interests of God instead of the interests of man.

23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

27 "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

TRANSITION TO POINT ONE

I, like many of you, have read this passage and heard sermons on these verse over and over again. Usually we're made to be convicted of how high our lifestyle is over the rest of the world, and how our money can go such a long way if we would just sacrifice eating out one day a week. We usually walk away thinking we should live in a 3000 sq/ft house instead of a 5000 sq/ft house.

POINT ONE Most of us fail to recognize the obvious **purpose** Christ had for what He went through.

Why do you think Christ picked up His cross? We all know the answer to this question, but let's read a passage of Scripture that tells us. Turn with me to Romans chapter 5 verses 8-10. Christ's purpose for His suffering was to reconcile us to God. He was motivated by His Great Love for us.

Christ first loved us, then saw a need in us, and then actively left His comfort zone to meet that need.

Christ's sacrifice was filled with purpose. It was motivated by purpose.

What is our purpose for sacrificing?

Sacrificing without purpose is impotent.

TRANSITION TO POINT TWO

OK, so we've been hounding about the importance of purpose. So, what *should* our purpose be in our sacrifice? We know Christ's purpose was born out of His love for us and a need He saw in us. Are we to adopt this same purpose? Or does Christ have a different purpose for our lives? Let's read another Scripture that gives us a clue. Turn with me to II Corinthians 5:18-21

POINT TWO Do we have any lost ones in our life whom we love?

Now that we see our purpose is to be the same as our Lord's. When He tells us to pick up our cross daily and follow Him, what is He asking us to do? If our Lord's heart in His cross was to love the lost, and meet their greatest need, how are we to obey His call to pick up our cross daily?

Well, it seems like we first have to **love the lost**. Take a second and count on your fingers all the people you can name with whom you interact on a daily basis who are unsaved. [pause] Now run through those names again and, for each, ask yourself, "do I really **love** this person." Not in an abstract sense, as we all are supposed to love everyone, but do I spend time with this person outside of work, school-- when I don't have to. Do I enjoy spending time with this person. Does my heart break when I see them in need?

Our Lord knew us intimately before our salvation. He loved us so much before our salvation that He died for us. How do we develop relationships like this with the unsaved? Do we pro-actively spend time where we know we will develop relationship with the lost? We're big talkers about "relationship evangelism". How do we start to relationally evangelize if we don't actively seek to initiate intimate loving relationships?!

TRANSITION TO CORE PROPOSITION

Ok, say we **do** invest our time and come to place where we develop a number of true, heartfelt friendships with unbelievers. How often do we consider their eternal state an urgent need? Remember:

CORE PROPOSITION

Sacrifice without purpose is impotent.

Earlier we suggested that a tactic of Satan was to subtly remove our purpose from the Kingdom. Here, more than ever can we observe how he has done this in the Church. We might talk about children dieing of aids in Africa and our hearts might be moved. They should be. But when was the last time a reminder of the eternal state of unbelievers moved your heart?!

TRANSITION TO APPLICATION

If Jesus' purpose of reconciliation is to be our purpose, how can we be ministers of reconciliation?

APPLICATION

1. Most of us have people with whom we daily work who are not saved. They don't have little social clubs-- like our churches have become. Invite them to watch the Suns game over dinner after work. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable and love the lost.
2. If you don't have things in common with many people at work, find a place you enjoy and purposely make it a rule to frequent that place on a systematic schedule. They have open Irish sessions at Rosie McCaffrey's Irish pub every Sunday night, where I have being attending and doing my homework each Sunday night now for 2 years. I have made wonderful friends and have had many opportunities to share the Great Love of Christ to people who know I care about them. And they know I will be there consistently if they have thoughts during the week. They might just say, "Hey, that's one I need to ask Troy about this Sunday night."
3. And that neighbor that you hate. How do you love them? This is bigger than our preference. This is about their eternal state, and has Satan turned them into the one whom we hate. God made them a beautiful person and Satan just has a foothold in their life.
4. Our earthly desires are a good measuring stick of how close our heart is to the Heart of God. It is, and was then, natural to seek the whole world. But God has given us a new nature which has the power to shift into manual and override the desires for this world.

TRANSITION TO CONCLUSION

Let me close by encouraging you to not be like those in the last verse of our passage who were not willing to taste death for our Lord, and who will be ashamed at His coming.

CONCLUSION

Sacrifice is hard. God doesn't ask us to do the hard things as a pointless exercise to prove our love to Him. He was, in His cross, reconciling to God a world He loves, and now has given us this ministry of reconciliation.