

THE HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

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WAS I WORTH IT?

Wasted effort is frustrating. At some point in our life, we've worked very hard on something only for it to fall apart in the end. Perhaps we've spent hours writing an essay, only for the computer to crash and the document be lost. Maybe we've put extensive work into planting a garden, only to discover an animal has dug up and destroyed everything we've planted. Even more frustrating than these is when we put forth time, energy, or money towards a person about whom we care, only to see them either be unappreciative of our efforts or waste what we've invested in them. To be fair in some instances, maybe

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these people didn't realize how hard or how long we worked on their behalf. The most painful experiences, however, are when they do know. How would you react in this case, devoting so much time and energy to someone special in vain? Most of us would stop trying, eventually. At some point, we would tell ourselves that we've learned our lesson and we won't do it anymore for them. It's sad to see both someone so unappreciative of effort and someone who has felt their efforts so wasted that they gave up on the other.

As of this writing, the United States recently celebrated Memorial Day. Memorial Day is one that is supposed to recognize, remember, and honor the sacrifice of military members who died in service - those who, in a literal sense, gave their life for their country. Unfortunately, many put the intended purpose of this day secondary or tertiary; it's primarily a day off from work. We find ourselves in more thought regarding how to spend this "free" time and/or the logistics of cook-outs and other events for this day. I came across a writing that posed a question regarding this day. When I think about the individuals who died in military service, particularly those who faced the horrors of war hardly imaginable, was I worth it? These individuals sacrificed their lives in service to carry on the freedoms and ideals of this country. If these individuals who died a violent death on a battlefield for my future saw my life today, would they be appreciative of the American I make? Or, would they think I've wasted their sacrifice and my life has become a cascade of daily hedonism and self-fulfillment? These soldiers had only one life to give. Was I worth it?

Clearly, we can see the parallels with being a Christian. We "should" be abundantly aware of the tremendous sacrifice that Jesus made for us. This sacrifice was made so that we could have the opportunity to access the salvation we need yet don't deserve. Would Jesus approve of how I live my life having access to the opportunity His death and resurrection provided? Was I worth it? As the soldier had only one life to give, Jesus

had only one sacrifice to make; there are no more sacrifices for us.

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:26-29)

Knowing this, we have to realize how amazing the gift of His sacrifice was and still is. When we fail to recognize effort, time, energy, and resources devoted towards us, we demonstrate ingratitude for the sacrifices made. We all have access to the opportunity provided by Jesus' sacrifice, but how few of us actualize the opportunity? Those who were directly healed of leprosy by Jesus in large lacked the gratitude to even thank Him.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. (Luke 17:15-18)

Of ten lepers healed, only one took the time from enjoying the newly gained gift of physical health to actually thank Jesus for His efforts. That is, within minutes of a miracle, 90% of those affected had moved on to focusing on themselves rather than Jesus, provider of said miracle. Having been approximately 2000 years from the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, how much easier is it for us to demonstrate similar ingratitude?

When you truly appreciate someone's sacrifice, you generally try to make it worth their effort; you try to use all of what they gave you, you try to "live up to it" and actualize the potential of their gift. As children, sometimes we're slow to do so in regards to those who raised us. As we grow older and start to realize the amount of sacrifice our parents and others made for us, we begin to "pay it back" and try to take care of those who once took care of us. We were given a gift from God's grace in the form of Jesus' death and resurrection. We can never truly repay it, but are we attempting to make use of what we've been given? Even on a smaller scale of the countless gifts with which we've been blessed, how do we utilize the time we've been given? How are we using the minutes; are we using them towards serving God or towards serving ourselves?

God thought we were worth it, and the sacrifice wouldn't have been made if not.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

Are we living our lives to show we were worth it? At the end of the day, maybe this is how we should assess how our day was. Was I a good Christian today? Was I worth it?

BEN

SEE YOUR BROTHER IN NEED

Do you know what it feels like to have a need? I suppose that each one of us has needs. We all need air to breathe and food and water to sustain our bodies. We probably all need love and have a need to feel a purpose in our lives. We all need God and appreciate that He gave His one and only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. A need is something that

you require to avoid a bad consequence. I suppose that there are all kinds of needs. Some needs, like air, are very basic. At the other end of the spectrum, you may also say that you need something when in reality it is actually just a desire or a want.

Do not just think of what you need, but consider the needs of your Christian brother or sister. The apostle John taught us in 1 John 3:17,

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

When you have resources and you see your brother in need but you coldly avoid sharing with him what you have, how do you have love? How can you say that you love your brother and how can you say that you love God?

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also. (1 John 4:20-21)

Since loving God is the first and greatest commandment, opening up your heart to love your brother and helping him in his time of need is of great importance.

Jesus described His judgement of the nations in Matthew 25:31-44. He will separate the people to the right and the left as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then

shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Mat. 25:41-46)

The reason given for sending those on the left to everlasting punishment was that they saw those who had needs and they didn't minister to the needs. They saw those who were hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, or sick or in prison. These had needs of food, drink, lodging, clothes, and to be visited. Those on the left saw the need, had the ability to help, but shut up their heart and did not help. They did not have the love of God in them. Therefore, they were rejected by the Lord.

Here are some of the commands given in the Old Testament relative to the poor and those in need.

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. (Deu. 15:7-11)

And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take

thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. (Lev. 25:35-37)

There may be times when it is unwise to give for a need. For example, if someone is lazy and will not work, neither should he be given food to eat (2 The. 3:10). If someone misuses your gift and purchases something different from the intent of the gift, it may be unwise to continue giving to that person. I do not have all the answers on giving. I do know that the Bible is clear that the motive for helping those in need should be love. If you shut up your heart and do not demonstrate love, the love of God does not abide within you.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:18)

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

The responsibility for helping those in need rests with those who have the ability to supply the need.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Tim. 6:17-19)

My encouragement to you is to be eager to help those who you see that have a need.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:9-10)

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
July 7 - 9	Antioch Douglasville, GA	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
July 16 - 21	Oak Grove Woodland, AL	Allan Daniel (Woodland, AL)
July 19 - 21	Clay Village Clay Village, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
July 21 - 23	Blockhouse Bottom Hagerhill, KY	Timothy Lewis (Eubank, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. For what did Esau sell his birthright to Jacob?
2. What was the name of Hagar's son?
3. What should we "seek first"?
4. Who did Paul heal at Lystra?
5. Noah was a "preacher" of what?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What relation was Jacob to Abraham? GRANDSON (Mat. 1:2)
2. Who won the hand of Caleb's daughter, Achsah?
OTHNIEL (Jos. 15:16-17)
3. Who persuaded Delilah to betray Samson?
LORDS OF THE PHILISTINES (Jdg. 16:5)
4. Who was Boaz a kinsman of? ELIMELECH (Ruth 2:1)
5. What inscription was on the altar in Athens?
TO THE UNKNOWN GOD (Acts 17:23)

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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