

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Sin of Selfishness

Caleb Westbrook

Selfishness is a characteristic that no one likes to see in others. Yet so many times we are blinded to our own shortcomings in this area. Selfishness is defined by Webster’s as “the exclusive consideration of a person on his own interest or happiness.”

Selfishness can manifest itself in a variety of ways. From consistently not showing up on time for appointments, not giving of our time, or not checking on others we either directly or inadvertently tell people that we think their time is not as valuable as our own. By constantly focusing our conversation around ourselves, thinking too highly of ourselves, and be obsessed with our actions or words being noticed, we communicate to others that we think we more important than they are.

With this attitude of selfishness our culture seeks to continue to feed our self-indulgence: one’s personal interests are often placed above others’ welfare. However, God’s Word does not allow for such self-centered gluttony.

In Galatians 5:20 “selfish ambition” is listed as one of the

works of the flesh. The consequence of such behavior is that “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” In Philippians 2:3 we find Paul urging “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit...” As we think about the Philippians, those brethren who readily supplied to Paul’s need (Phil. 4:16), it may be surprising that Paul gives this exhortation, but it must be realized that selfishness is a struggle for everyone. Paul provides the answer to selfishness in Phil. 2:3-4, “...but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Our focus must be on the welfare of others and not merely ourselves. Paul further illustrates this in the supreme example of Christ. Phil. 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” We see this focus on God and others by Christ’s action, “...He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Christ was truly selfless, he did not seek to gratify Himself or His own happiness, rather He focused on the will of the Father (Mk. 14:36).

Another way we demonstrate our selfishness is through sin. At the very foundation of sin we are faced with a choice: to follow God or not. In sin we selfishly seek what we think is best while casting aside God’s will. This act of selfishness is absolutely contrary to submitting our lives and will to God.

Rather than seeking to glorify or satisfy self, we should have the mind of Christ. Jesus taught us that we should do good works, not to be seen by men, but to give glory to God (Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18). Christ also taught us by His marvelous example to have compassion for others by which He ultimately gave His life for us (John 15:13). Yet in the following verse (John 15:14) Jesus tells us how we are His friends: we must forgo our selfishness and seek to obey His commands. In essence we must sacrifice our will and selfishness for Him in order to be a friend of Christ.

Let us throw off the selfishness in our lives and seek to have the mind of Christ: focusing on God and others rather than self.