

**FOR THE
JOY...**

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Jan. 5, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: Godly sacrifice leads to great joy and fulfillment.

Scriptures: Isaiah 53; Hebrews 12:1-3

Is. 53:1 NASB Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty that we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our wellbeing *fell* upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due?* ⁹ His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; **if He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see**

***His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.**

Heb. 12:1 NASB Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.



The first Olympic triathlon competition was contested in the year 2000 in Sydney, Australia. The men's winner was an unheralded Canadian named Simon Whitfield, who had been competing in triathlons since the age of 11. (Triathlon consists of 1500M swimming, 40K cycling and 10K running. World-class competitors complete it in a little less than two hours.) He went on to become a 10 time Canadian champion, but few have ever heard his name. He competed in four Olympics, and retired in 2013 at the age of 38 after 27 grueling years of hard work and sacrifice. His sacrifice was mostly unseen, unknown and unrewarded. He did it "For the Joy..."

In our minds, the word sacrifice usually has negative connotations – something to be avoided if at all possible!

But what really is ‘sacrifice’? For our purposes, we will follow Oxford’s definition: “an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy”.¹

Immediately our perception changes! Sacrifice is no longer a bad thing; it becomes a means to a better end.

When we contemplate Isaiah’s famous prophecy of Christ’s passion, we see a detailed account of pain and suffering that is almost unimaginable. The thought of actually *experiencing* it is unbearable!

“His appearance was marred more than any man” as Isaiah 52:14b tells us. Chapter 53 continues: He was despised, smitten of God, afflicted, pierced, crushed, scourged, cut off and in anguish.

Jesus gave up something of tremendous value – His own life – to gain something He saw as more important and worthy to possess – our lives!

... for the joy set before Him [He] endured the cross, despising the shame (Heb. 12:2b).

So as we enter this Year of Sacrifice, we need to insert the adjective “Joyful” before the word Sacrifice so we always remember that our sacrifices are not pointless or frivolous, but godly, worthwhile, fulfilling, of eternal value and joy-giving.

As a mother sacrifices sleep to feed her child, it is for a worthy purpose.

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<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sacrifice>, accessed Jan. 1, 2013

As parents sacrifice the limited time they have to build their own relationship to teach, train and develop their children's character, it is time well spent.

As we sacrifice an extra hour of sleep to pray for the salvation of our family, friends and neighbours, we give up something good in the hope of something far better.

As we sacrifice our desire for a bigger house today in favour of investing for a more secure retirement tomorrow, we exhibit wisdom and foresight that leads to a better future.

As we sacrifice our social life and having a "good time" in favour of studying for the diploma we desire, we know that there is greater joy, accomplishment and fulfillment ahead.

As we rise before dawn to run the miles and do the workouts in hope of winning a championship, we focus on the 'joy that is set before us'.

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So, what sacrifice is it that makes you stay up late at night or get up early in the morning?

What is it you are willing to pay a lot of money to own or give to support?

Who are the people you spend time with, to teach, train and love at the expense of your own leisure?

What are the hard things you do and practice that give you great joy?

What are the things you willingly give up for the sake of providing for others?

If the answers to these questions only revolve around things that pertain to our present life on Earth, we are missing a great opportunity. We need to be engaged in sacrificial living that will have an eternal impact on our families, our church, our communities, our schools, our workplaces and our world.

No doubt there are things we have told ourselves we really want to do, things that will require sacrifice, hard things that will stretch us and build our spiritual muscles.

It is now time for us to get off the couch, put on our overalls, pick up our tools and get to work!

Tools like prayer, fasting and Bible study. Tools like teaching, mentoring, giving, helping others. Driving someone to a doctor's appointment, visiting the elderly, shopping for a single mom, cooking, cleaning, and providing company and a listening ear.

We do not do these things in an aimless manner, but we work and sacrifice for the joy that is set before us.