

Sacrifice Series 8:

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October 5, 2014

Congregational reading: John 15:1-7;12-16

Sermon in a sentence: If Jesus was willing to sacrifice His own life for us, there is nothing good He will withhold from us if we ask Him.

Scriptures: John 14:12-15; 15:7-10,16-17; 16:23-28

John 14:12-15 NASB “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father. ¹³ “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*. ¹⁵ “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

John 15:7-10 NASB “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples. ⁹ “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:16-17 NASB “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷ “This I command you, that you love one another.

John 16:23-28 NASB “ In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.

24 “ Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. 25 “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26 “ In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. 28 “ I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

As Jesus prepared for His passion – His final, incredible act of sacrifice on our behalf, He gave His disciples some words of instruction and encouragement that are very surprising. Given the setting, it would be expected that He would be most interested in having His own needs met: “I am going to die in the next few hours, so I need you to give Me your help, your support, your protection, your approval, your sympathy”.

Instead, Jesus began to impress upon His disciples His desire to give them anything they desired and asked for!

Right after establishing His unique role as Saviour and His total oneness with the Father, He promised that He would do greater works through them than He Himself had done:

John 14:13-15 NASB “ Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. 15 “ If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Like me, you may have read and prayed this scripture a hundred times in the past, and wondered why your prayers have not been answered! So let us read these passages a little more closely and see if we can learn what conditions are necessary to see the fulfillment of this promise.

The first condition is obvious from reading v.13: **our prayers will be answered, “so that the Father may be glorified in the Son”.**

When we last spoke about ‘the Father being glorified in the Son’, we learned that His glory is revealed in His activity for the benefit of others.¹ Any good father wishes to act for the benefit of his children. A father is honoured for his generosity, not for his selfishness. In the same way, God is glorified in His Son through His Son’s self-giving toward humanity. Whatever God does for our benefit shows the world the vastness of His resources and largesse in providing for the needs and desires of His dear children.

Is our prayer for *our* glory or the Father’s glory? Is it strictly to fulfill our desires, or will someone benefit spiritually from our request? The answer to these questions will determine the outcome of our prayer.

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The next point is the most crucial, but not quite as obvious as the others we will consider. As we read the first three times Jesus makes the promise of answering our prayers, He follows with the commandment that we:

- Love Him and keep His commandments (14:15)

¹ See message “Exalt Jesus”, July 6, 2014; discussion of Phil. 2:5-11. <http://www.faithsanctuary.com/pdf/Exalt%20Jesus.pdf>, accessed Sept. 30, 2014

- Abide in His love by keeping His commandments (15:10)
- Obey His commandment to love one another (15:17)

Love should always be outwardly focused. Intense self-love is harmful as it causes us to dismiss the needs of others and focus on our own desires and lusts. Jesus' offer of answered prayer is conditional upon our love for Him and our love for others.²

Jesus demonstrated this in the Garden of Gethsemane. To paraphrase, He prayed: "If it is possible, let Me live and not die. Let me walk away in freedom, rather than die in shame and agony. Let Me continue to live in the awesome power and presence of God, rather than to feel the utter forsakenness and hopelessness of a sinner. But if none of these things is possible Father, Your will be done".

Many times we have prayed as Jesus taught us: "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven" (Mt. 6:10 KJV). And many times God answers *that* prayer instead of other prayers we may pray that are not in accordance with His perfect will.

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The third condition is that we continue to "bear fruit" (15:16). The passage speaks of "fruit" eight times between v. 2 and v. 16, although Jesus does not specify exactly what the "fruit" is. However, if Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, clearly the fruit the branches bear is the fruit the vine produces! As John states in one of his epistles, "... as He is, so also are we in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17b).

As we look at the life of Jesus, we see the fruit of love, compassion, forgiveness, integrity, fearlessness,

² In fact, love is the basis of all of God's laws (Matt. 22:36-40)

impartiality, dedication, sacrifice and so much more! So, Jesus says:

John 15:16 NASB “ You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

If we are self-willed, self-focused and bearing fruit that is not in accordance with what the vine produces, we will not only have unanswered prayers, but will in fact be cut off from the vine (v. 2). At the same time however, the opposite also applies. If we bear good fruit, the Lord will prune us, (even though it hurts!), so that we can bear even more fruit and have our prayers answered.

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Finally, God answers our prayers and gives us whatever we ask (in His will), so that we will have fullness of joy in our lives (16:24).

Fullness of joy comes through being loved by Him, loving Him in return, loving our neighbours as ourselves, giving glory to God in all we do, and allowing His fruit to be borne in our lives. When these things are in place, “ **Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full**” (Jn. 16:24).

“No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11 NASB).