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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | FAITH AND SELFISHNESS MARCH 27, 2025  By **Martha Rodman** on March 27, 2025 |   *Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. Colossians 3:20. NLT.*  Last Sunday, in one train of thought, our pastor mentioned the word "selfish". He was encouraging us to love and reach out to others. It was a revelation: Jesus wasn't selfish. If He wasn't selfish, I am supposed to be growing to be like Him. So, I have to deal with my selfishness! I need to be more willing to pick up the phone. I also need to go out of my way to speak to someone. This has got to change, if I want to be like Him.  It was God's intention that he would make us in His image. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created him. Genesis 1:27. ESV.*It is a complex mystery for me. I struggle to comprehend how God could have created mankind, knowing we would mess up. Adam and Eve were given free will. With Satan's temptation, we find the first opportunity for selfishness appears. *Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?*Here is her chance to honor God and avoid this temptation. She begins well. *Of course, we may eat fruit from the trees of the garden,' the woman replied. It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.* We find her stating the truth, but not really understanding what she is saying. She's seems to do well. Then the serpent disputes her words. *You won't die!* *The serpent replied to the woman*. I wonder if she even understood what "die" meant? He then planted a seed of jealousy and a doubt of God's goodness. *God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.*Selfish thoughts are very similar. They cause us to think "what is best for me?" *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. Genesis 3: 1-6. NLT.*  Eve partook of the forbidden fruit because she was convinced it would be beneficial to her. She did not consider anyone else. Selfishness does the same. It becomes our baseline for decision making. If Jesus had let selfishness rule His life, He never would have left His throne on high. He would have stayed with the heavenly Father and we would have been in trouble. I am so glad He didn't let selfishness rule His heart.  The way to squelch selfishness is to listen to the Holy Spirit. Follow His promptings. Sometimes, that may mean not doing something your eyes thought was right. *Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward in heaven.* Matthew 6:1. ESV. It is a matter of our hearts motive, isn't it? Are we being moved by compassion or selfish ambition? As my friend says, "check yourself". Galatians 5:16 says *But I say, walk in the Spirit and you will not gratify the deeds of the flesh. ESV.*This means we seek His will, not ours. It is time to grow up and put off childish things and ways. Nothing is more selfish than a toddler!  Oh my friends, His will and ways are always higher than ours. We can always trust that when we deny ourselves and take up His cross, it will ultimately be for our benefit. It will be worth it. It may be uncomfortable, it may cause some pain. It may costs us time, money and emotions. But if He is asking, it will always be worth it. Follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. You never know who or what the benefits will be. My friend Kay once followed those promptings and made a phone call. This cost her something because of long distance charges. But I needed that phone call, because my father has just passed. It was a small thing, and she could have ignored it, but it meant so much to me.  Selfishness is rooted in pride, fear, and a lack of trust. We think we must control our lives because no one else cares as much for us as ourselves. Pride tells us, someone else can do it, we are too busy, too important to do the task.  Fear, pride and lack of trust reveal a lack of understanding who our God is. God cares, my friends. Getting to know Him better allows trust to grow. The Apostle Paul is quite an example of selflessness. He endured so much, but rejoiced in the fellowship of suffering with Christ. I think most of us find ourselves, like Peter in John 21:21. *Peter asked Jesus, "What about him, Lord?*(meaning the disciple John). *Jesus replied, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.* If we begin to compare ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise.  Reading and studying the Word of God helps us learn His character and voice. Following that voice will never lead us to do things His word opposes. When in doubt, consider what the most loving thing you can do in the circumstance. Consult with your elders if you are feeling led to do something BIG or you are uncertain about. I did a lot of praying. I also searched my soul before speaking with our pastor about starting our Senior Life Ministry. I knew it was going to cost me time and energy. I had to think about the fact I probably would make some folks unhappy, or disappointed. But the Holy Spirit helped me. I worked through those things. I chose to leave the negatives in God's hands. I trust Him with the results. I had to put off my selfishness.  Selfishness hinders not only us, but the Body of Christ. Can you imagine what He could do with a group of people who say yes to Him and no to their selfish desires? I want to remind us all, God has always had people who willingly laid down their lives for His life. Even now, Believers in India (and other parts of the world) are suffering for His sake. Last week my friend messaged me that many churches and pastors were attacked, arrested and put in jail. Many of us debate whether or not we feel like going to a prayer meeting. Praying for the persecuted church is another opportunity to get rid of selfishness. Putting off our selfishness and putting on obedience makes us available to help grow the Kingdom. Let's grow up, my friends.  *Father, please help us deal with selfishness. Help us learn to trust Your leadings. Teach us how to listen to the Holy Spirit with more accuracy and quicker obedience. In Jesus' Name, amen.* |