

## Hallmarks of the Transformed Life The Call to Selfless Living

**Intro: What's in it for me? That might be the operative principle in human relationships today. But it is not the principle by which the transformed disciple lives. Listen carefully to these exhortations:**

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; (Romans 12:14-16)*

**In these verses Paul asks us to do something hard—really, really hard. He calls upon us to be selfless in our attitudes toward other people! He calls upon us to defy the norms by which most people live and adopt a new way of thinking about our relationships with others.**

**The transformed disciple lives a selfless life!**

***Selfless when others hurt us!***

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Get this scene in your mind. You are the victim of someone else's hateful and sin. Everything in you says, "This person deserves nothing good from me! I will not say anything good about this person. Instead I will call upon God to judge Him—to repay him/her with eternal torment for his hateful and wrong deeds". Yes, he deserves this.*

*Yet Paul instead urges us in such a case to do the exact opposite of what our selfish nature says to do.*

*"Bless" those who persecute you! It is the word from which we get "eulogize". Find something good to say about that person. Take that person to God and ask for God to help him! If there is anybody in all the world who ever needed a prayer it is the person whose heart is so full of hate that he cannot love, but only persecute those better than himself.*

*Ill. McGuiggan's account of the office lady*

*This may be one of the hardest things we are ever asked to do; but it is a hallmark of the transformed life.*

***Selfless when others are happy!***

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, When we are focused on ourselves it is hard to smile when something good happens to someone else. We just can't bring ourselves to stick out our hand and say, "Congratulations!" Instead our thoughts may turn to own life and we may mentally wish that we had been the one to be blessed. We may even weigh our worthiness against the person who is happy. Why should he have such things and not me? But God calls upon us to be selfless when good things happen to others. It is so easy to say, "But what about me?" Don't do it! Make*

*way for the selfless love of Christ in your heart and find a way to say, "I'm happy for you! I'm glad that you are being blessed!"*

***Selfless when others are hurting!***

*and weep with those who weep.*

*Isn't it easy when others are having a hard time to say things like, "Too bad. He made some bad choices." Or, "If he only knew what I was going through, he wouldn't think he had it so bad". That's selfishness gone to seed!*

*Instead Paul says "weep with those who weep".*

*When other people are hurting, don't rationalize!*

*Don't say, "There's nothing I can do about it."*

*When other people are hurting, do sympathize!*

*Ask yourself, "What would it be like to experience what they just experienced"?*

*Some people find it easier to express their feelings; but no person should be without them.*

*When other people are hurting exercise!*

*Ask yourself, "What can I do for them?"*

*It is a selfless man indeed who sees others hurt and feels no hurt of his own. Last weekend over 75,000 people were washed off the planet.*

*What were your thoughts? I confess that for a while I refused to let that sink in. One talk show host, used the occasion to talk about the folly of advocating "global warming". Of course, there may be little we do about the hurt on the other side of the planet; but there is a lot we can do about the hurt next door!*

***Selfless even when we think of others!***

*Be of the same mind toward one another; (Romans 12:14-16a)*

*Almost all commentators seem to agree that the idea is not unity but reciprocity. Lenski comments that it is the idea of "having in mind for another the same thing that under like circumstances one has in mind for oneself. I am to want you to have what, if I were in your position, I should want myself to have."*

*The selfish person always wants more and better conditions than others. They are happy for things to be improved with you as long as they are at least equal or better off. But the unselfish person can look at others and say, "I wish that people were as blessed as me and even more!"*

*Truly these are challenging exhortations! And one may ask:*

**How can we be so selfless?**

***The attitudes implied by these exhortations are not "natural" to humanity, not because we are incapable of them or were created without the capacity for them. It's just that over the course of time life teaches us to be quite different, to be selfish. For most people, the thought of living for others, the thought of living with others in view, has become so foreign to their way of thinking that the call to be selfless seems to defy our created nature.***

***These attitudes can only exist in a heart that has been remade by the Spirit of God—transformed by the renewing of our mind. That transformation takes place when we relate powerfully to what Jesus did for us!***

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)*

*Jesus came to redeem us from ourselves, from our selfishness. He did so by his own act of consummate selflessness. Jesus gave up heaven to save us! He didn't say, "What's in it for me?" Instead he submitted to the Father's will and came to this lowly earth! When he neared the cross (and the full pain of the cross loomed before Him) He cried out to God, "Father, is not any other way?" And when the answer was clear that there was not He sacrificed himself anyway! He gave Himself for us! He shed His blood for us! He gave His life for us!*

***If there is ever a moment when we find it difficult to carry out Paul's words, let these words come to mind:***

*"When my love to Christ grows weak; when for deeper faith I seek, then in thought I go to thee, Garden of Gethsemane. There I walk amidst the shade while the evening twilight fades; see that suffering friendless one weeping praying there alone. There behold his agony, suffered on the bitter tree. See His anguish, see his faith, love triumphant still in death. Then to life I turn again, learning all the worth of pain, learning all the might that lies, in a full self-sacrifice.*

**Conclusion: Here is one of the most amazing things about God. If any being ever reserved the right to be self-centered it is God. He existed before we did! He made the world we live in! He needs nothing that we can give! Yet, this self-sufficient God is not self-centered; instead he is awesomely selfless—giving everything for the sake of His sinful creatures.**

**It is His selflessness that sets us free from the dominion of all things earthly and will bring the unselfish into the greatest blessings of all—His presence forever!**