

October 17th, 2021

Love Is Not Self-Centered

1 Corinthians 13:5b

The root of pride: *private love of self*

Last week the Apostle taught us that love is not proud. Pride is a deformity of spirit. Just as blindness is a physical deformity, so pride is a spiritual deformity. It is grotesque and utterly incompatible with love. Paul now goes to *the root of pride* in our next clause, which is this: “[Love] does not insist on its own way.”

The NIV renders it: “[Love] is not self-seeking.”

The NKJV “[Love] does not seek its own.”

The NASB “[Love] does not seek its own *benefit*.”

The HCSB “[Love] is not selfish.”

The NLT “[Love] does not demand its own way.”

The NET “[Love] is not self-serving.”

The ISV: “[Love] never thinks just of herself.”¹

Private self-love: *the root cause of all misery*

The reason a person is prideful (last week’s message) is because *self is at the center of their moral universe*. This is the root sin. And it is the root cause of all the misery in your life. Wilhelmus A Brakel a leading theologian in the 17th century said: “All your restlessness is the result of seeking of yourself.² [Being self-focused] is the cause of [all] discouragement and lack of freedom, estrangement from each other, wrathfulness, quarreling, and...boasting...it is the dead fly which causes the precious ointment to stink.”³ The dead fly that

¹ BEREAN: it is not self-seeking. BEREAN LITERAL: it does not seek the things of its own. KJV: seeketh not her own. GOD’S WORD: It doesn’t think about itself. LSV: does not seek its own things.

² Wilhelmus A Brakel, *The Christians’s Reasonable Service: Vol. 3 The Law, Christian Graces, and the Lord’s Prayer*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 1994), pg. 410

³ *Ibid*, pg. 409

caused the Corinthian Church to stink was their self-centeredness. *Why* did they take each other to court in ch. 6? Because they loved self and the stuff that belonged to self *more than* the souls of their brothers. *Why* did they trample on each other's conscience in ch. 8? Because they loved self and their bellies and their Christian liberties *more than* protecting the souls of their brothers. *Why* were they misusing the spiritual gifts in ch. 14? Because they loved self and the reputation they gained by their gifts, *more than* edifying the souls of their brothers.

A three-fold evil

Question: were any of those Christians happy when they put themselves first? Have you ever been happy when you put yourself first? No. Therefore we see a three-fold evil that accompanies all self-seeking. 1) Self-seeking is an evil against yourself, *because* it can never make you happy. 2) Self-seeking is an evil against your neighbor, *because* it always results in their abuse. 3) Self-seeking is an evil against God, *because* it makes an idol out of self.⁴

The Big Idea...

Living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your self, to your neighbor and to your God, therefore love is not self-centered

☆ Our Doctrine

☆ Our Duty

☆ Our Delight

⁴ Not thy will, but my will be done is the root sin, and root cause of all misery in the world. Ant it is the murderer of true Christian love.

I. Our Doctrine

Paul's *not* saying we can't assert our rights

As per usual, let's begin with what Paul's *not* saying.⁵ When he says "[Love] does not insist on its own way" he's *not* saying: *we should never assert our rights*. In the book of Acts, we see Paul at times asserting his rights (**Acts 22:25**⁶) and at other times *not* asserting his rights (**Acts 16:22**⁷). It wasn't as if Paul failed the rule of love whenever he asserted his rights. What we find is that Paul asserted his rights *when* the love of neighbor and the love of God was at stake. He didn't look at a situation and ask: "...ok which of these two options will bring me the most comfort?" No he asked: "Will the gospel be advanced better if I assert my rights or not assert my rights?" It is a tragedy today to see so many evangelicals saying foolish things about how it is a bad gospel witness if we assert the Church's right against the state. That this is somehow unloving. Dear congregation, this is a jurisdictional question. What did God render to Caesar and what did God render to God? If we give to the state a jurisdiction that doesn't belong to it, we are not being *loving* to Christ or to His precious lambs. We must get out of our minds this childish notion of love, as if love never picks up the sword, as if love never goes to court, as if love never resists tyranny. Paul sued in Roman court and took his case all the way to Caesar, *precisely* because He loved the Church and the Christ who died for her. True Christian love will respect authority, and it will defy the authorities when required.

⁵ Also see Brakel pg. 399-400. Edwards has an extended section of this differential diagnosis on pg.161-166 in *Charity and Its Fruits*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2013)

⁶ "Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?"

⁷ "The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods." also cf. v.37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out."

Asserting your rights *for* the love of your neighbor

This is also true on the personal level. There are times when you should *not* assert your rights when someone sins against you, by simply overlooking the offense. **Proverbs 19:11** says “Good sense makes one slow to anger, *and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*” But there are other times when you should assert your rights when a brother sins against you because he has broken the relationship. Jesus commands this. **Matthew 18:15** “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault...” It is not loving to your brother to willingly go along with their sin. **Galatians 6:1** “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual *should restore him...*” So that’s the **first thing** Paul is *not* saying: he’s *not* saying that love never asserts its rights.

Paul’s *not* saying you must renounce your happiness

Secondly, when Paul says “[Love] does not insist on its own way” he’s *not* saying: *you must renounce all your own happiness.*⁸ Dear congregation, God sent His Son into the world, so that we would be infinitely happy. The gospel is the good news of happiness. **Isaiah 52:7** says “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings *good news of happiness.*” Personal happiness is *not* at conflict with loving others. How do we know? Two reasons: 1) Look at **v.3** “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, *I gain nothing.*” Why is this a terrible consequence—that we would *gain nothing*—if we had not love? Why would we want to *gain*? Because we want to be happy! Paul is appealing to personal happiness as one of the chief motives to love other people. In other words, *if*

⁸ C.S. Lewis says this here: “If you asked twenty good men to-day what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire.” Quoted in John Piper’s *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, (Colorado Springs, CO.,: Multnomah Books, 2003), pg. 19-20

you don't love others, *then* you are not pursuing your own happiness, because a loveless life means you will gain nothing. **2)** Personal happiness is not at conflict with loving others *because* of the 2nd Greatest Commandment: "You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*" (**Mark 12:31**). *How* must we love our neighbor? *What is the standard* by which we are to love our neighbor? We must love our neighbor *as ourselves*. Self-love is the standard. Jesus designed us to love ourselves, which is nothing more than saying that Jesus designed us to love our own happiness. That's how we are to love our neighbor. We are to love their happiness *just as* we love our own happiness. So that's the **second thing** Paul is *not* saying: he's *not* saying that love renounces its own happiness.

Love does not seek her own *private* good

So then what *is* Paul saying? Simply this: Love does not insist, or demand, or strive after, it's own personal and private good. Jonathan Edwards puts it like this "...when it is said that charity [love] seeketh not her own, we are to understand it of her own private good—good limited to herself."⁹ Turn back to chapter 10, Paul has already said this. Look at **v.24** "Let no one seek his own good [*you could insert "private" before good*], but the good of his neighbor." Or **v.33** "...just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage [*you could insert "private" before advantage*], but that of many, that they may be saved."

The self-denial love chooses

So yes, Paul is commanding us to a self-denial. But what is the "self" he is calling us to deny? There are two selves we must deny. **1)** We must deny that *carnal self* that stands in opposition to God. True Christian love wants to kill any part of self that opposes the Lordship of Christ in any part of your life. **2)** We must deny that *carnal self* that stands in opposition to the good of others.¹⁰ True

⁹ Edwards, pg. 164

¹⁰ Thomas Manton, *The Works of Thomas Manton Vol. 15*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2020), pg. 287. See Brakel pg. 403-404 for "The Objective of Self-Denial"

Christian love desires the happiness of others just as much as it's own happiness. Therefore to live otherwise, to pursue your carnal self in opposition to God and to the good of your neighbor is the greatest evil.

Principle: the greatest evil is to live for *yourself*

And so we arrive at our main principle. *Living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your self, to your neighbor and to your God.* Let's take this one piece at a time.

Truth #1: Living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your self

Please turn to **Ecclesiastes 3:11**. We read “[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, *he has put eternity into man's heart*, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” God put eternity into your heart. What does that mean? Children, boys and girls, do you remember playing with those square and circle blocks when you were really small? The game was to put the square blocks in the square holes and the circle blocks in the round holes. What happens if you tried to put the square block in the round hole? It wouldn't fit would it. No matter how hard you tried. This Scripture says that God put an eternity shaped hole in your heart. Nothing but eternity can fit that hole. Which means that your heart has a longing for something that is beyond time, space, and all created things. Meaning, you can only be satisfied with that One Being who is beyond time, space, and all created things, and that Being is God.¹¹ Your heart is a bottomless pit, and only a bottomless, timeless, limitless God can fill it.

¹¹ As Augustine famously prayed “You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You.” Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1. Think of it this way. Every single day your physical body has *needs* it must meet in order to live. You *need* food, you *need* drink, you *need* oxygen, you *need* shelter. The same is true with your soul. Your soul has *needs* it must meet in order to live. It *needs* God, self will never satisfy. You are doing unthinkable evil to yourself if you live solely for you.

A man without walls

Not only is God *alone* able to fill your heart, but God *alone* is able to protect it. Turn quickly one book to your left to **Proverbs 25:28**. “A man *without self-control* is like a city broken into and left without walls.” A man without self-control is a man who is ruled by *self*, whose highest king is *self*. What is this man like? A great city broken into by the enemy, and all its walls are broken down. What does this mean? It means that if *self* be king, then your defenses will be broken down and you will be open to every temptation. A city without walls invites every invading army to plunder it, so a person who lives for *self* invites every temptation to plunder it’s soul. Think of it this way: you don’t have a pornography problem, or a drinking problem, or a gossiping problem, you have a self-control problem. There is a usurper on the throne of your heart, and he is inviting every enemy to plunder your soul. Loved ones, living for your *self* is the greatest evil you can do to your self.

Truth #2: Living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your neighbor

Please turn to **2 Timothy 3:1-5** “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be *lovers of self*, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.” Notice the very first characteristic of these people. **v.2** they are “lovers of self.” Its listed first *because* it is *the root sin* out of which every other sin is *merely* fruit. Consider the evil a *lover of self* commits against his neighbor. A *lover of self* is (**v.2**) “...abusive [and] disobedient to their parents”; (**v.3**) “heartless...slanderous...brutal”; (**v.4**) “...treacherous [and] reckless.” John Calvin says here:

“We shall never love our neighbors with sincerity...until we have corrected the love of ourselves...for the love of ourselves leads us to neglect and despise

others,—produces cruelty covetousness, violence, deceit, and all kindred vices,—drives us to impatience, and arms us with the desire of revenge.”¹²

Dear congregation, *why* was Abraham willing to pass off his wife as his sister and give her into the hands of another man? Because at that moment, he loved *his own safety* more than her (**Genesis 12:13**). Why did Pilate crucify Jesus though he knew Him to be innocent? Because he loved *his position* more than truth and justice (**Matthew 27:26**). Dear congregation the Apostle James asks us: “What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? “Is it not this, that your passions [*your desires for self-pleasure*] are at war within you?” (**James 4:1-2**) Loved ones, living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your neighbor.

Truth #3: Living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your God

Jesus gives this charge to everyone who would bear His name. **Matthew 16:24** “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” Meaning if you say you follow Jesus Christ, then you must slay any comfort, any power, any pleasure that you love more than Him. He is jealous over your heart, and He will not share it with any other rival. Now what happens when we put *self* next to Jesus on the throne? The throne cannot seat two, it will only have one king. Who is cast out? Jesus. Because Peter was not willing to deny himself his comfort and his freedom, he denied Christ. “I do not know the man” (**Matthew 26:72**). Because David was not willing to deny himself a fleeting lust, *he denied the Lord His honor* by committing adultery and murder. **2 Samuel 12:14** “...by this deed you have *utterly scorned* the LORD.” Every evil you have ever committed against the Lord had a single origin: self love. In that moment you loved your self, your own pleasure, your

¹² Quoted by Lou Priolo in *Selfishness: From Loving Yourself to Loving Your Neighbor*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2010), pg. 5-6

own comfort, your own desires, more than God. And that is the greatest evil that we could commit against God.¹³

Therefore, love does not insist on it's own way. That's our **doctrine**: living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your self, to your neighbor and to your God, therefore love is not self-centered.

II. Our Duty

We have 3 duties.

1. Informatory Use

Our **first duty** is simply to *consider* the nature of true Christian love. True Christian love has a *diffusive* nature to it, it dispenses, or disperses or gives of itself.¹⁴ The sun diffuses light and heat, it's in its very nature to spread itself to everything around it. The same thing is true with clouds, it's in their very nature

¹³ It's the absolute perversion of Paul's words: 'Indeed I count every regarding Christ as loss because of the all-surpassing worth of knowing me, of pleasing me, attending to me.' Loved ones, living for your self is the greatest evil you can do to your God.

¹⁴ Edwards, pg. 172

to diffuse water, to give life to the earth. That's how love is. Love by its very nature *gives* of itself.¹⁵

Ephesians 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ *loved* the church and *gave* himself up for her.”

John 3:16 “For God so *loved* the world, that he *gave* his only Son”

Ephesians 5:2 “And walk in love, as Christ *loved* us and *gave* himself up for us”

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who *loved* me and *gave* himself for me.”

That's our first duty, is to consider that love has a diffusive nature, a nature that is always giving itself away to its beloved.

2. Experimental Use

That brings us to our **second duty**: to *examine* ourselves. Do you have a diffusive type of love? Do you deny yourself for the sake of Christ's Kingdom and the good of others? Beware that there is a counterfeit type of self-denial that belongs to unbelievers. Jesus said in **Luke 6:32-34** “If you love those *who love*

¹⁵ It's a the greatest contradiction to have a selfish love. Selfishness is not diffusive but *contractive*. It shrinks back and confines all to itself. It is a black hole that is always taking never giving. It is like “[the grave], the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says, “Enough” (Proverbs 30:16). “A selfish principle never devotes itself to another” (*Ibid*, pg. 176).

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True Christian love, considers the the one whom it loves to be part of himself. Edwards says here: “By love, a man's self is so extended and enlarged, that others, so far as they are [his] beloved, do, as it were, become parts of himself, so that, wherein their interest is promoted, he believes his own is promoted, and wherein theirs is injured, his also is injured”(*Ibid*, pg. 172). So we hear of the self-giving love of Moses in **Hebrews 11:25** “...choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.” Or of the self-giving love of Esther. She went into the king—though it was against the law—to plead for the life of her people. And she simply said “...if I perish, I perish” (**Esther 4:16**). Or of the self-giving love of the earthly church. **Acts 4:34-35** “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”

you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those *who love them*.³³ And if you do good to those *who do good to you*, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.³⁴ And if you lend to those from *whom you expect to receive*, what credit is that to you? *Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.*” That is mercenary love. Love that expects payment. True Christian love is like the sun that shines its light and radiates its heat to others “...expecting nothing in return” (Luke 6:35). So test yourself. Lou Priolo in his book “Selfishness: From Loving Yourself to Loving Your Neighbor” provides a list of questions to test ourselves.¹⁶

Who do you consider who you make any decision? A selfish person *only* considers how his decisions affect himself *rather than* how they might benefit others or bring glory to God.

What do you spend time thinking about? A selfish person spends more time thinking about his own private delights rather than about God, His Word, or the delights of eternal significance.

What is the narrative that has captivated your heart? A selfish person is more captivated by the exaltation of self, than the exaltation of Christ.

Do you write people off? A selfish person will write others off or have little to do with them if they have been hurt or offended by them.

How do act when you meet new people? A selfish person will spend more time thinking about how to impress them than how to minister to them.

Do you witness to others when God gives you opportunity? A selfish person doesn't witness because they are afraid of being criticized or rejected.

¹⁶ Priolo, pg. 6-7

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Also see the 9 attributes of selfishness in Brakel 404-405

What is your greater longing, to be noticed or to be godly? A selfish person cares more about being noticed than being godly.

How do you react to criticism? A selfish person can't let things go or becomes depressed when he is criticized.

Do you rejoice when others are promoted? A selfish person can't rejoice when others are given honor and recognition.

What does your checkbook say about you? Would your checkbook testify that you are concerned about Christ's kingdom and the good of others? Or would it testify that self is all that matters?¹⁷

What does your prayer life say about you? Prayer is so hard because it requires the denial of self. Selfish people pray very little if at all, because they don't deny themselves.

Loved ones, in what areas are you most selfish?

3. Admonitory Use

That brings us to our **third duty**: *rebuke*. If you are a self-centered person, if you have made your own concerns *the main business of your life*, then you have set up the idol of self in the place of God. Consider the terrible things God threatens against those who live for themselves.¹⁸

Romans 8:13 "...if you live according to the flesh [according to *self*] you will die."

¹⁷ This question and the next did not come from Priolo.

¹⁸ God's greatest judgments on earth are handing men over to themselves - Psalm 81:12; Acts 7:42; 14:16; Romans 1:24, 26, 28. See Manton pg. 190

Galatians 6:8 “For the one who sows to his own flesh [sows to his *self*] will from the flesh reap corruption.”

If you love your own *self* more God, you are shut out from eternal life. That is the most dreadful thing that can be conceived. Not only are you robbing yourself of happiness in this life—because happiness is found in the Lord—you are robbing yourself of happiness in eternity. The Scripture says, that you will look for any kind of relief on that Day, but you will not find it. All that will be left to you is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Those are our duties. 1) We must *consider* what true love it—it is a love that is diffusive, it is a love that *gives*—“For God so *love*d the world, that He *gave* His Son.” 2) We must *examine* ourselves to see where in our lives we are self-centered and selfish. 3) We must *rebuke* our selves if our own concerns have become the main business of our life, because that is setting up and idol of self in the place of God, and it is being cut off from eternal life.

III. Our Delight

Beholding love by beholding Him

How can Paul say that *love does not insist on its own way*? Because He saw this love in the face of Jesus Christ. Beloved consider the four ways in which you have been loved by Son of God.¹⁹

1. Christ loved you while you were His enemy

Jesus did not love you like sinners love each other. Sinners will love those that love them. But when Jesus Christ beheld you, fallen in Adam, dead in sin, a son of disobedience, walking in darkness—He didn’t see a soul that

¹⁹ Much indebted to Jonathan Edwards for these four truths about Christ’s love. See Edwards, pg. 178-180

loved Him. He saw a soul that despised Him. He saw a soul that hated the light because his own deeds were wicked. You gave Him every reason to hate you in return. But this Christ loved you though you made yourself His enemy. **Romans 5:10** "...while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." **1 John 3:16** "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us."

2. Christ loved you His own Person

Jonathan Edwards says here "By [Christ's] love to us, *if we will but accept his love*, he has so espoused us, and united his heart to us, that he is pleased to speak of us and *regard us as himself*."²⁰ Loved ones, all of your concerns became Christ's concerns. He looked upon your guilt and *He made it His own guilt* by Divine imputation. So that the Innocent Son of God became guilty. And He looked upon His own righteousness, and *He made it your righteousness* by Divine imputation. So that you, a vile filthy sinner, became as righteous as the Son of God Himself. What greater love could you find, then this Great Son of God who considers you His bone of his very bone, and flesh of His very flesh?

3. Christ loved you by spending Himself for your sake

At every stage in redemption Jesus denied Himself for your sake. The King of Glory came into the world in a lowly manger, to poor parents. **2 Corinthians 8:9** "...though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor." And this poverty clung to Him throughout His ministry. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (**Matthew 8:20**) He suffered under the same temptations as you. **Hebrews 4:15** "...in every respect [He] has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." At the end of His life, He poured out His own blood as a sacrifice to God for you. And even now, the Resurrected Christ who sits at the Right Hand of God still spends Himself for you. **Hebrews 7:25** "...since he always lives to make intercession

²⁰ Edwards, pg. 178

for them.” He has held nothing back from you. Jesus spent Himself for your sake.

4. Christ loved you without any expectation of repayment

What could you possibly give to Jesus to repay Him for all this? You have nothing. He didn’t give you Himself, because you had some good that He stood in need of. As we heard in our call to worship: “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, *as though he needed anything*, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24-25). Jesus gave Himself to you freely knowing that you had empty hands. And He didn’t despise your utter poverty. He loves being the supplier of all your needs. “My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

How to love others

Loved ones, those four ways that Christ loved you, is what Paul means when he says “*love doesn’t insist on its own way.*” If you call Jesus Christ your own, if you have received Him by faith so that He is your Lord and Master, then His Divine Love has been implanted in you, by His indwelling Holy Spirit. This is now *how you are to love*. Jesus said “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: *just as I have loved you*” (John 13:34).

Therefore just as Christ loved you when you were His enemy, so we are to love others. We love them, *not because they love us*, but because this is how Christ loved us while we were unlovable.

Second, just as Christ considered our interests His interests, so we are to look on the interests of others. **Philippians 2:4** “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Love calls us to be so united to others, that we will look on their concerns as our own.²¹ **Romans**

²¹ We are to be in third place in the Christian life. God’s concerns are first. Our neighbor’s concerns are second. And ours are third.

15:2-3 “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³*For Christ did not please himself.*”

Third, just as Christ spent Himself for our sake, so we are to spend ourselves for the good of others. **2 Corinthians 12:15** “I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls.” God gave you life and breath and everything else so you could spend it on others, giving yourself to them, for their good.

Fourth, just as Christ expected no repayment for His love, so we are to love without an expectation of return. We are called to a higher love than mercenary love. **Luke 6:35** “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.”

You will not throw your life away

Let’s conclude by considering the rewards God promises for loving like this. The rewards are staggering. “Whoever loses his life for my sake *will find it.*”²² You see, the truth is that those outside of Christ don’t love their own happiness enough. By pursuing their own earthly happiness, they are forfeiting eternity. They are like Esau trading their birthright for a bowl of stew. The greatest gift you could give yourself, the surest way to love your own happiness for all eternity to “devote yourself to God, [and] sacrifice all your own interests to Him.”²³ You will not lose the smallest shred of happiness if you place the good of others above your own earthly good. On the contrary, Jesus said in **Mark 10:29-30** “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time...and in the age to come eternal life.” If the Lord will not fail to reward you for a cup of cold water given in His name, how He fail to reward you for a life spent in loving others?

²² Matthew 10:39

²³ Edwards, pg. 183