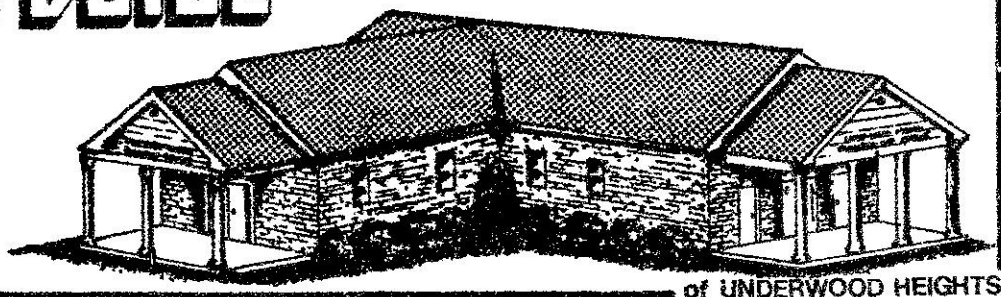


THE VOICE



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SELFISHNESS - A ROOT SIN

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There are few, if any, sins that have greater impact upon mankind than the sin of selfishness. This sin has blighted the lives of countless thousands causing domestic turmoil and alienation, disrupting peace and harmony in the spiritual body of Christ, and fomenting national and international strife. Selfishness has all the earmarks of a root sin. Like the love of money as set forth in I Tim. 6:9,10, it not only brings sorrow and disappointment to those who are selfish but also effects the lives of the innocent. Like the love of money it leads men away from the faith, causing them to fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in perdition and destruction. Selfishness is the principal cause of many ills that afflict our society today. It disrupts families, hinders the work of the church and the spread of the gospel. Like many other sins it is insidious and treacherous. Many who are selfish are unaware that they have been ensnared. It is time for self-examination.

WHAT IS SELFISHNESS?

This question may appear to be foolish and unnecessary for "everybody knows what it means to be selfish". This is true to a degree, but it is also evident that few fully understand it's destructive nature and the extent of it's evil consequences.

A quick look tells us it deals with self. Webster says, "Selfishness is caring too much for one's self and too little for others; showing care solely, or chiefly for one's self; undue regard for one's own comfort and welfare, often at the expense of others." Although the

Bible deals extensively with this sin, the word is not found in the King James, or the American Standard Versions (1901). However, it is found in the N.A.S. in Phil. 2:3 - "selfishness or empty conceit" and in James 3:14 - "selfish ambition". It is also found in later versions. Vine, in his definition of "self-willed", gives us additional light by saying "self-pleasing, or one who is dominated by self-interest and inconsiderate of others." These definitions clearly show that the selfish person is concerned solely with his own desires and interests regardless of its effect upon others, even the innocent. The implications of this sin are evident. There is no limit to the mischief it may bring to the home, church, and society.

However, it should be understood that care and concern for one's own welfare is not sinful. God never intended for man not to be interested in his physical and spiritual well-being. God expects man to think well of himself and to maintain a good self-image. One cannot live a productive life nor accomplish anything worthwhile if he has a low estimate of himself. Self-respect and self-love are necessary pre-requisites to loving others (Rom. 13:9). Man bears the stamp of divinity, and should walk uprightly and be somebody! (Gen. 1:26; Psa. 8:4-9). It is only when self-love is uncontrolled, and centered exclusively on self to the exclusion or injury of others that it becomes selfishness.

THE SERIOUS EFFECTS OF SELFISHNESS

Selfishness, like other sins, grows and becomes more pronounced if it is not controlled. It also paves the way for additional sins, and sets in motion a series of chain reactions that may effect the lives of future generations. This is especially true in the home and the church.

The desire to please self develops pride and arrogance, and tends to make one cruel and oppressive. It develops an overgrown ego that is unsympathetic and heartless. It blinds the eyes to justice and fairness, and makes one ungrateful and calloused to the needs of others.

Selfishness often leads to covetousness which is idolatry (Col. 3:5). It can destroy noble aspirations and bring one to a lower plane. Selfishness denies one the privilege of living a positive Christian life and doing unto others as one would have them do unto him (Matt. 7:12). The selfish person is a poor investor, for what he hoards or spends on himself will in time be lost by the passing of time and time-ly affairs.

Thus, selfishness is counter-productive and deceptive. It brings

no ultimate good to the one who is selfish and only works harm to countless others. It promises happiness and satisfaction, but brings sorrow and disappointment.

GOD CONDEMNS SELFISHNESS

The Bible has much to say about selfishness, but space permits only a few passages. Please read these references in full:

Matthew 16:24 - True discipleship demands denial of self. One who refuses to practice self-denial forever closes the door to discipleship.

I Cor. 10:24 - The language of the text suggest a habitual practice. There must be a continual seeking to do for others, and not for self.

Phil. 2:4 - Barnes says, "Be not selfish. Let the welfare of others live near your heart. No one is at liberty to live for himself or disregard the wants of others."

Jesus condemned selfishness by giving the supreme example of unselfishness, "... for Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). A selfish life is in direct opposition to this example.

SELFISHNESS IN THE HOME

The destructive work of selfishness seriously effects every phase of our lives, but no where is it more far-reaching than in home and family life. The home is the foundation and feeder of every other institution. Whatever takes place in the home effects, in some measure, the lives of an entire nation. Corrupt the home and family life and all society is effected.

The home today is in serious trouble. It seems that all the forces of evil are pitted against the home. Strife, open dissension, conflict, alienation, and separation threaten the very existence of the home. Divorce rate is at an all-time high, resulting in broken families, battered and abused children. Families not broken by divorce are in constant conflict. Most of the police calls are to settle domestic strife. About 50 percent of American women have left the home to enter the work world leaving small children with babysitters, day care centers, etc. Shelters for battered wives, homeless and abused children continue to increase and the end is not in sight. How long our nation can survive concerns all right-thinking people. Basic to all these problems is the sin of selfishness. Only when love, forbear-

ance, and compassion prevail, and people learn to be considerate of others instead of self, will these problems go away.

(Editor's Note: The foregoing article was written especially for The Voice by brother Allen. We appreciate it, and commend it to you. It needs the careful consideration of every reader of this paper. Are we selfish? Let's be honest! d.t.)

GLENN MELTON MOVING TO UNDERWOOD HEIGHTS

Brother Glenn Melton, who is presently located with the church at Gulfport, Miss., has been invited by the brethren here to work with Underwood Heights. Glenn is in his early 50's. He was born in north Alabama but grew up in Texas. He will be the new editor of this paper. He and his family will be moving here by the last of February or first of March. We wish him the very best in this work.

D.T.

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