

K.P. Yohannan:

In the four Gospels, Jesus talks about forsaking all, giving up everything, not laying up treasures on earth and being willing to walk away from even your own life. First Corinthians 13:3 says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Unless the motivation behind the sacrifices we make is love—unselfish and genuinely motivated by God and His grace—our sacrifice profits nothing.

The teachings laid out in books such as True Discipleship¹ need to be balanced by those presented in books such as Grace Awakening.² The church at Ephesus made great sacrifices, worked hard and endured difficult times. But the Lord said to them, "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent" (Revelation 2:4–5). He said this simply because they had lost the reason for all the sacrifice and work; they had lost their first love—Jesus.

One of the marks of people who serve God with great sacrifice, but without the inner reality of grace and love, is that they criticize and condemn others, putting them down and finding fault. They look at others' houses and think something is wrong with them for living in such wealth or squalor. They look at their clothes. They look at their kids. They compare and complain and murmur, despising people who may not even have the so-called "deeper life," or revelations and gifts of the Holy Spirit that they have.

The older son in Luke 15 was much like this. While the younger brother was squandering the father's wealth with wild living, he was laboring in the field as a full-time worker, sweating away. He was not wasting his father's money. But he was full of jealousy, anger and bitterness. He had a condemning and unloving spirit. He imagined that his younger brother had done all sorts of wicked sins, such as living with prostitutes, all of which the younger brother may have actually never done. He accused his father. I can imagine him saying, "How can you claim that you are my father and that you love me? I've been with you all these years, and you haven't ever given me a party. Yet my wicked brother returns, and look what you do for him."

This attitude is the fruit of legalism and Phariseeism. It is sacrifice combined with a hard, unloving heart, and it is no good. That is why it is so important to keep a balance between living a life of sacrifice and extending grace and love to all.

I will not change the message I gave you in The Road to Reality³ about sacrificing comforts and giving up worldly possessions for God's eternal work. I will not compromise, because I keep telling myself that 100 years from now, earthly possessions aren't going to matter. But I regret those days when I spoke that message without grace.

One particular time comes to mind. I was invited to a home in the Midwestern United States to speak to a group of medical doctors about missions. This house was like the Taj Mahal or some great palace. I sat there fuming, angry and upset at the wealth I saw. I said to myself, "These people's lives are all a show. Why can't they sell all this and give the money to world missions?" I could hardly wait for the chance to speak. When my time came to speak, I said nothing about the fancy house. But what I did say was so harsh, unkind and judgmental. My attitude was so unlike Christ.

God in His mercy helped me to grow up and understand His heart. Then I learned there are millionaires who love God and serve Him with more commitment than many full-time Christian workers I know.

In Philippians 4:11–12 Paul writes, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (NIV). We must learn to live with this attitude. Simply put, Paul is saying, "If you put me in a five-star hotel, I am very happy. Bring all the best food, the caviar. And if you put me in a no-star hotel, no problem. I am content and happy there, too."

If you are called by the Lord to be a person of sacrifice, if you are given the grace to give things up, I can tell you, it is wonderful. I could not have given up the things I held on to if it were not for the grace and the love of God. As the Lord is my witness, I found such joy and love in giving them up. I never felt sadness and sorrow in surrendering these things. Instead I got such joy—joy that nothing in the world could give me. It was God's grace.

We cannot impose His calling for us on others or assume that others are wrong or less mature because they do things differently. It is the Lord's work in us, not our own doing, that makes us willing and happy to surrender these things.

Notes:

1 McDonald, True Discipleship.

2 Charles Swindoll, Grace Awakening (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990).

3 Yohannan, K.P., The Road to Reality.