**The Benefits of Self Denial**

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Scripture: Acts 2: 42-47

Introduction

We live in a ‘what’s in it for me?’ culture. If someone is asked to do something, we sometimes wonder, ‘What’s in it for me?’ We want to know what the benefits will be for us, either financial or personal, before we say yes. If the so called benefits don’t meet our approval, we are sometimes quick to walk away and leave it to someone else.

While self-denial for the Christian is not just about a few weeks on the calendar where we view pictures and hear stories about the financial need in a developing country, we sometimes have made it such. Jesus however, was clear about what self-denial means for his followers.

In Acts 2: 42-47, we are given a picture of what self-denial should look like among God’s people and the benefits it brings to both the giver and the receiver.

While Self-Denial and ‘What’s in it for me?’ may sound contradictory, I want to share with you from Acts that when we exercise self-denial there’s always something in it for us. That is not our motivation. We do not give for the sake of getting something for ourselves, but there are definite benefits to all who live a life of self-denial.

Let me share with you three benefits from God’s Word.

The early church believers had received the promised Holy Spirit and as a result were empowered to live out their new found faith in ways that would shape the world for good. In the book of Acts we see the new believers involved in acts of kindness and self-denial that not only brought hope and healing to the receiver, but benefits for the giver as well.

In Acts 2 we see that…

1. Obedience Brings Blessings to Me

Acts 2: 44 says, “All the believers were together and had everything in common.”

The benefits to us are never about material gain, but about Spiritual blessings we receive when we are obedient to God. The unity of the believers in Acts 2 went beyond a unity in fellowship with one another. Their unity was about much more than sharing a meal together, which they did. It was about much more than gathering together for prayer, which is extremely important, and they did. Their unity spread beyond the walls of their own fellowship to those in need around them. Their unity of fellowship led to the meeting of the needs of their fellow human beings. Right here in the early church, we get a glimpse of Self-Denial and Partners in Mission. In

helping others, they were blessed themselves. A unity of spirit and purpose was felt among them and God blessed them for their obedience.

In Acts 2 we see that…

1. My Gift to God Blesses Others

Acts 2: 45 says, “Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”

The result of the believers’ unity is clearly shown in this verse, “They gave to anyone as he had need.” In Acts 4: 32-35 we see a continuance of what we witness in Acts 2. In Acts 4:32 we read, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.”

These Christians didn’t feel that what they had was their own, so they were able to give and share, eliminating poverty among them. They would not let a brother or sister suffer when others had plenty. How do you feel about your possessions? We should adopt the attitude that everything we have comes from God, and we are only sharing what is already his.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In Acts 2 we see that…

1. Gifts Freely Given to God Multiply

Acts 2: 46-47 says, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Our sacrificial gifts of time and money are used to spread the gospel. In spreading the gospel we are contributing to kingdom growth. We may not see the fruit of our labors ourselves, but the benefits of the gifts we give are far reaching as it relates to kingdom growth – families helped, and souls saved because our gifts have allowed God’s work to continue.

Conclusion

So, the next time you are invited to deny yourself and be a Partner in Mission, and you are tempted to ask or maybe think, ‘What’s in it for me?’, remember that while our motivation is never to get something back for ourselves, God does bring spiritual blessings to those who are obedient and give from the heart. While it won’t result in an increase in your bank account, your Spiritual bank will be full!

1. Chronological Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale Publishers [↑](#footnote-ref-1)