

“My Life I Can Give, But...”

Scott Cain

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Thus Jesus defined true friendship. He described the *agape* love that He would soon demonstrate toward mankind. This is the love that a man must have toward Jesus in order to be His friend. This is the love that exists when a person has true care and selfless concern for the welfare of another.

Jesus showed mankind true friendship by His sacrifice (Tit. 2:13-14). His agony in Gethsemane showed that His sacrifice was not taken lightly or performed easily (Luke 22:41-44). His friendship was not partial or halfhearted. Jesus not only taught His apostles the definition of friendship: He performed it.

If we would return His friendship, we must be willing to lay down our lives and pick up His commandments (John 15:14; Mt. 16:24-26). Those who love Christ obey His will (John 14:15). Many claim to serve Christ through public declaration of His name. Others demonstrate some outward form of self-sacrifice, but they do not truly love Him because they never render full obedience to Him (Mt. 7:21-23). Only those who truly love Him will receive a crown from Him (II Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12). Only those who truly love Him love His word of truth (II Th. 2:10-12; John 17:17). Partial obedience and perverted doctrines are unacceptable to Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul wrote that a person might actually lay down his life as a martyr for Christ, but without *agape* love that martyrdom would be worthless (I Cor. 13:3).

Lisa and Amy had been friends for years, and all who knew them knew that each of them would gladly give her life for the other. One day, as Amy was about to leave for a once-in-a-lifetime vacation to Australia, her telephone rang. It was Lisa. She had been in a car accident, and she desperately needed her friend’s help. Amy immediately asked what Lisa needed, thinking that she would gladly donate an organ or any amount of money to assist her friend. Lisa’s needs were significantly less than what Amy expected; Lisa’s recovery would take three weeks and she simply needed Amy to help her get home and assist her with her two small children during that time. Amy, who a moment earlier had been willing to forsake her vacation at the prospect of undergoing surgery and donating an organ, saw the request Lisa made as an unimportant one. “Don’t you have someone else who can help you with this? My flight leaves tonight and I cannot get a refund on my tickets?” She was willing to make drastic sacrifices for her friend, but unwilling to do the little things.

For a person to “lay down his life” for Christ is not limited to death; it also involves sacrificing any habits, preferences, addictions, or beliefs that are contrary to Jesus’ soul-saving gospel. Many are confident that they could withstand torture for Christ’s sake, but are they willing to endure temptation or inconvenience? However short a person comes of rendering full obedience to Christ is exactly how short that person comes of truly loving Jesus and spending eternity with Him.

How often is a true friend ashamed to introduce his friend to the people he knows? The same idea is true of our friendship to Jesus. If for no other reason, the true friend of Jesus is motivated by appreciation to spread the gospel in order to bring

other souls to Him. This is the desire of the world's Best Friend (I Tim. 2:4; Mt. 28:18-20). A Christian may claim to be willing to sacrifice his life to save a friend's life, but often that same Christian is not willing to sacrifice a few minutes to try to arrange a Bible study and save that friend's soul. If a person's life is worth saving, why not his soul?

We may never have the opportunity die a physical death for Jesus, but every day we have the opportunity to live our physical lives for Him (Rom. 12:1-2). The possibility of martyrdom is unlikely, but we can count on the necessity of dedicating our time, energy, and attention to the word of God and the work of Christ. Rather than daydreaming about an extraordinary sacrifice in an extraordinary situation that may never arise, let us determine to make the ordinary sacrifices in the ordinary circumstances we have every day. He gave His life for us. Do we have a minute to spare for His work?