

# MATCHLESS LOVE

Joe Slater

We admire people who willingly give their lives for the benefit of others. A soldier might fall on a grenade to save the lives of fellow-soldiers. Loving parents will shelter their children from lethal danger, even if doing so means their own death. Such self-sacrifice is not uncommon. Why, then, do we give such particular attention to the sacrifice of Jesus?

First and foremost is the fact that Jesus' death benefits us eternally. Others, by giving their lives for us, might bless us with political freedom, physical life, and material wealth. Jesus, however, is the only one whose death provides the remedy for our sin problem. But that leads to another reason Jesus' sacrifice stands apart from the rest:

Paul wrote in Romans 5:7, "*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.*" A righteous man, in this context, is one who does what is right. He lives up to the requirements of God's word. The "good man," however, goes a step further. He not only fulfills his obligation, but serves above and beyond the call of duty. Someone might willingly die for a person who does right; more likely we would be willing to die for that good person who surpasses expectations.

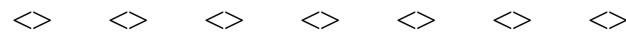
What about Jesus? Paul draws the contrast in Romans 5:8 – "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Let that sink in awhile. Jesus didn't give His life on Calvary because people were so remarkably good. In fact, they weren't even doing the "minimum requirements" of God's word. They were sinners! Vile, filthy, ungodly, wicked sinners! Think about it – would you willingly give your life for a bunch of people who

hated you, spread ugly lies about you, refused to listen to you, and finally conspired together to torture and murder you in the most brutal way possible? That's one of the things that sets Jesus' sacrifice apart from any and all others.

Think also of the love of God the Father. Would you give your son for a bunch of ingrates who hated him and were doing everything in their power to hurt him? Could you listen to him cry out in agony, yet suppress the urge to rescue him? Our Heavenly Father did that!

Why did Jesus die for people who hated Him? Why did God the Father permit it? Here's the answer to both questions: Love.

May we so appreciate His love as to love Him in return by trusting Him and obeying His will!



## Are You Really A Christian?

The word "Christian" literally means "adherent of Christ." We make the initial step of adhering to Christ by being baptized (Galatians 3:27). But a Christian is not only one who initially belongs to Christ, but continually adheres to Him. Thus it could be said that a true Christian is . . .

Committed to Christ's cause  
Honoring Christ's Lordship  
Responsible toward Christ's requirements  
Involved with Christ's work  
Serving in Christ's name  
Telling others of Christ's gospel  
Imitating Christ's Example  
Accepting Christ's will  
Never-ending faithfulness to Christ and His church

--Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)

# What's Missing?

The rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22) came to Jesus and asked "*What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?*" Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The young man claimed he had kept them from his childhood. But his question implied he felt he lacked something, "What's missing?" Jesus told him that he lacked one thing. If he wanted to be perfect (complete), he must go, sell what he had, give it to the poor and then follow Him. The young man went away sorrowful because he was very wealthy.

There is much to commend about this man. He was a moral individual. He was conscientious concerning the commandments of the Lord. He also felt a need to find greater comfort than he found in keeping the Law. But his problem was greed. The commandment against coveting would certainly include the sin of greed. The man was rich, but he wouldn't part with a dime for others.

What do we lack? We may be pretty good compared to all the bad folks out there. Compared to the tax collectors and sinners, the rich young ruler was a diamond in the rough. But Jesus saw his flaw as He sees ours. The Christian walk isn't a Home Town Buffet where we pick and choose what we want. The child of God must make a total commitment. Whatever is lacking must be finally faced and handled. Hebrews 12:1 tells us to put away the sin so easily entangles us.

Paul talks about fleeing "*youthful desires*" (2 Tim. 2:22), but as we age, we discover there are plenty of "middle aged desires," and "elderly desires" that must be put away as well. We must examine our lives and ask God to show us through His word, "what we lack?"

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)