



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – February 20, 2011

Heart to Heart...

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'" (Matthew 16:24)

What led Jesus to make such a statement to His disciples? Peter thought he had just solidified his place with Jesus while correcting the mind set of Jesus. Jesus just told His disciples He must die and Peter responded with a resounding: *"You won't die! It will not happen to You!"* (Matthew 16:22) Peter needed to understand what was really involved in walking with Jesus.

"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" (Matthew 16:23)

Jesus knows that if one doesn't deny themselves; submit with all their heart to Him, they become a stumbling block to Him. Are you a stumbling block to what Jesus is trying to accomplish? Have you ever thought about it? Peter thought he had Jesus' best interests in mind when all the while Peter was hindering what Jesus needed to accomplish. Peter was self-centered and that self-centeredness was a hindrance to Jesus! Selfish seeking people always hinder the work of Jesus.

Today, many claim their love and faith in the Lord Jesus and they are sincere in their claim, just as Peter was sincere in his claim. In reality, they hinder what the Lord is trying to accomplish. Our eyes need to be opened! We have difficulty denying ourselves. Just listen to the talk and what efforts are given toward. "I want" becomes center stage when something comes up. Very little is really given for the Lord and what would help His cause. Looking out for the needs of other brothers and sisters takes self-denial. Looking for opportunities to reach out with a life-saving gospel takes self-denial. Training your children in the ways of a disciplined life and teachings of the Lord takes self-denial. Worshiping the Lord our God who called us to Himself takes self-denial when we are tempted to attend a ball game or some other event. Simply put, many are too busy with their personal self-reliant lives while claiming as Peter, their love and devotion toward the Lord. They are a stumbling block to Jesus and His work! How many times have you ever heard someone say they are looking to please the Lord, they want to help His cause and follow His desires? Have you ever said that?

"For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." Those who care about their own personal lives will lose something: their own life! When one denies self they gain their life. Life opens up to opportunities and avenues many aren't aware of because of self-denial. When was the last time you gave up your day off or a weekend because someone needed help? When have you sacrificed for one that is difficult to love? When have you gone the extra mile? Disciples of Jesus deny themselves but those who are hindering the work of Jesus are all about them and their life with little thought and effort into Christ. Think about it!!!

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