

The King's Garden. Self-sacrifice

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E. J. Waggoner

SELF-SACRIFICE

This is a peculiar flower, is it not? But many of you will recognise this at once as the plant that we call "Lovelies-bleeding." Do you think that a strange plant to grow in the King's Garden? We have taken it to stand for the beautiful flower that grows from the seed of the Word, "Thou shalt not kill."

You think it a very dreadful thing to take the life of another, and so it is. But Jesus said that to be angry with another without cause is the same as to take his life. "Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer."

What was it that caused the first murder? It was anger and hatred. Cain was angry with Abel, and that led him to kill his only brother. He did not mean to do it, for he did not know what death was; he had never seen a human being cold and still, with the breath gone from the body, and the heart-beat stopped.

You see, then, that Cain's sin was in being angry, and hating his brother; for the taking of Abel's life was an accident which happened because of his anger.

Think of this, when any bitter feelings of anger or hatred towards anyone rise up in your hearts. Think of the dreadful sin of murder, and of the words of God that "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," and ask Him to root out this bad weed from your heart garden, and make the sweet flowers of love to bloom there instead.

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." This is what God tells us to do, and then He adds, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

In sending the sunshine and the rain, God is giving out His own life to us. But we have learned already that He can only give life to sinners through His Cross. God does not take our lives because we are sinners and enemies, but He gives up His own life to save us. He pours out His own life-blood upon the Cross to reconcile us to Him, to make us His friends instead of His enemies.

Think of the Cross of Jesus Christ, but how Love lay bleeding upon it to save His enemies, and there you will learn the meaning of this commandment, "Thou shalt

not kill." You will learn what it is to be a true child of your Heavenly Father; for "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

And "hereby perceive we the love of God: because He laid down His life for us." So as we are to love one another as He has loved us, "we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren."

This does not always mean that we should die for them, but that we should live for others. We should give up our lives to serve others, doing all the good we can to all the people we can,—not to our friends only, and those who love us, but even to those who hate and are unkind to us.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink." Thus you may "overcome evil with good," and turn your enemies into friends. Read the story of Elisha and his enemies on the next page, [2 Kings 6:15-23] and you will see how he did this.

Jesus "went about doing good." His life was laid down long before He died on Calvary. From the beginning of the world He had been giving His life, that all His creatures might have life. And He can give His life to sinful beings, as are all in this world, only through His own death.

How different is God's way from the way of this world! Men fight and kill their enemies, and think that they do no wrong, or even that they are doing good and serving God. But God does not take the life of His enemies; He gives His own life to save them.

You must have noticed on the flags of Great Britain, the figure of the Cross, many times repeated. This is used as an ensign when the armies of England do battle with their enemies. Do not be deceived by this form, but always remember that the Cross of Jesus stands for life laid down for enemies. If we truly follow it, it will not lead us to kill, but to seek to save the lives of others, even though it be by the giving of our own.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son."

You have heard of the "Crusades," the Wars of the Cross, as they were called, which lasted for many years, and in which much blood was shed, and many lives were lost. But these wars had really nothing to do with the Cross of Jesus, for when the Son of God goes forth to war, all the blood that He sheds is His own, which He pours out to save His enemies.

This lovely and wonderful flower of Love and self-sacrifice grows not in the gardens of this world. It is of heavenly growth, and is found only in the King's Garden. The seed of it comes from the King's own heart of love, and "he that loveth not,

knoweth not God; for God is love." When God says to us, "Thou shalt not kill," He is sowing in our hearts the precious seed of His own loving self-sacrifice, that by His grace given to us we may be willing to lay down our lives to save the lives of others. May this seed grow and flourish in your hearts, that your lives may glorify the King by revealing His goodness.