



Peter began to say to Jesus, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come. But many that are first will be last, and the last will be first."

Introductory Prayer: Once again, Lord, I come to you to pray. Even though I cannot see you, I trust that you are present and want very much to instruct me in your teachings. In the same way that you demonstrate your love for me by spending this time with me, I want to express my love for you by dedicating this time to you with a spirit of faith, confidence and attention. Here I am, Lord, to listen to you and respond with love.

Petition: Lord, help me to have a pure intention in my acts of self-denial.

1. Peter's Question: At first glance Peter seems to be selfish, as if he were saying, "We have given up everything, now what's in it for us?" His question is not prompted by selfishness, but rather is a response to Jesus' previous statement that it is very hard for a rich man to enter heaven. In light of the difficulty of riches, Peter wants to know what the chances of entering the kingdom of God will be for someone who has given up everything to follow Christ. How detached from material possessions must we be in order to be assured a place in heaven? Jesus does not give us a concrete answer to this question, but he does tell us that those who have given up everything will not only receive a reward of eternal life in the age to come, but also ample reward in this life.

2. The Real Motivation: Reward is not given only to those who simply give things up, but rather to those who give things up for the sake of Christ and for love of the Gospel. Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice — or for that matter, sacrifice for a selfish reason — is worth nothing in God's eyes. Sacrifice has value only when it is done for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, for love. Our intention in self-denial must be to glorify Christ or to witness to the Gospel message. Is this the real

motivation of my self-denial?

3. Eternal Life: The reward for our self-denial begins in this life and has its culmination in the life to come. The difference between one and the other is that in this life there are also persecutions. In this life we enjoy both the love of Christ and suffering persecutions for his sake. This life is a life of purification of our love, purification of our intentions. By proving our love now, we will enjoy life with Christ for all eternity.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, you know how attached I am to myself, my possessions and my comforts. Help me to give up what I need to give up — out of love for you and your Gospel, not out of love for myself or what I might get out of it. Help me not to be afraid to deny myself for the sake of drawing nearer to you.

Resolution: I will give up something that keeps me from drawing closer to God.