

MEDITATION ON BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Night after night we are reminded by the television media that we are a nation at war. From half a world away we hear the explosions, view the carnage and number the dead. Horrific as this is however, there are rare, but encouraging, stories of bravery as some of our young soldiers distinguish themselves by risking their lives to save the lives of others. Our country recognizes these acts of bravery by awarding the coveted Medal of Honor. By law, this medal can not be awarded to those who act under orders, no matter how heroic the act. It is awarded, by the president, only to those in the armed services who act “above and beyond the call of duty.” The Bible defines this heroic action as love.

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

J. Vernon McGee tells a story that illustrates the difference between duty and love as follows:

One day a farmer says to his son, “I’ll milk the cow each day when I come in from the field, but you chop the wood and stack it on the porch when you get home from school.” Then one morning at breakfast the father says, “I don’t feel well today,” but he goes out to the field anyway. When the boy gets home from school, he chops the wood and milks the cow. He chops the wood because it is his duty but he milks the cow because he loves his father.

The first point to consider is this: Is it possible to go “beyond the call of duty” in service to the Lord? We who live in this age of grace are motivated to serve by love, not by command. Even so, we see our position in the concluding verse of the parable of the unprofitable servant.

Luke 17:10

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable (unmeritorious) servants: we have done that which was our duty (what we owe) to do.

The Lord has purchased us with His blood and we are no longer our own. We are His possession. We belong to Him. The life we now live is His life (Gal 2:20), led by His Spirit. He works through us as we present our bodies a living sacrifice (Ro 12:1). This is our reasonable service (duty) daily. No mere man has ever done his whole duty, much less “gone beyond.”

The second point is this: If a Christian cannot distinguish himself, is there no hope of reward? Is there no Medal of Honor for us? Two-thirds of the Medal of Honor recipients receive their award posthumously. Three-thirds of believers receive their greatest award posthumously; the chance to see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2). Any saint would find this more than enough reason for hope, but a gracious Lord loadeth us with benefits (Ps 68:19). Unbelievers may covet medals as a reward for distinguished service but we are assured a reward far greater, presented to us by the Lord Himself.

Matthew 25:23

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.