

“Unappreciation Days”

There are a number of ‘appreciation’ days on the annual calendar:

- April 17th – Husband Appreciation Day
- September 18th – Wife Appreciation Day

Some seem fairly normal:

- March 9th – Employee Appreciation Day
- May 6th – National Tourist Appreciation Day

Others are somewhat weird:

- April 30th – Hairstyle Appreciation Day
- February 23rd – International Dog Biscuit Appreciation Day
- September 22nd – Elephant Appreciation Day
- October 3rd – Virus Appreciation Day

There are extended ‘days,’ even whole months, dedicated to appreciation:

- July 3rd through August 15th – Air Conditioning Appreciation Days
- May – National Military Appreciation Month
- October – Clergy Appreciation Month

How does one go about creating an appreciation day? A national day is literally an act of Congress and takes a lot of work.

The first step is to contact your local congress person. Once you have their attention, you have to create the proposal and hopefully it will get onto the congressional agenda before too many years have passed. If you are intent on doing it and have the patience, it can be done.

Other days are created by companies, special interest groups, local governments, sports teams, and others by simply declaring it so. The vast majority of these are local, one-time events that do not capture much attention and are soon forgotten. Official or not, a number of these take hold, and show up year after year.

As for appreciation... William James once said, "The deepest principle of human nature is the craving to be appreciated."

I don't think I'd go that far... But I will say that feelings of being *un* or *under* appreciated often surface when I am counseling people. Perhaps some of you, feel *un* or *under* appreciated. It might be in your job... Or in your marriage... Or in your ministry.

If left to fester, it will depress you... Decieve you... Defeat you.

Paul the Apostle was definitely unappreciated. In two verses filled with emotion, he wrote to the Corinthians and said,

2 Corinthians 12:14 Now *for* the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

2 Corinthians 12:15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

During his second missionary journey, Paul had spent eighteen months in the Greek city of Corinth – more time than in any other city except Ephesus (where he spent three years). He labored day and night to support himself and to strengthen the believers. The more he loved them, the less he was loved by them.

Why didn't they appreciate Paul? Let me suggest two reasons:

1. The Corinthians prided themselves on their intellectual ability. Paul refused to act intellectually among them. It was at Corinth that Paul said, "for I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Although possessing a powerful intellect, Paul did not put it on display. As Chuck Smith says, "Paul simply taught the Word simply."
2. The Corinthians prided themselves on their open-mindedness and tolerance, even for sin. In one famous instance, they had a couple attending their church that consisted of a man and his father's wife. Paul rebuked them! He would not allow them to be comfortable in their carnality and sin but confronted them. Some of Paul's strongest language against sin among God's people is in this book.

Paul was *un* or *under* appreciated... But he was not depressed; nor deceived; nor defeated. He said, "I will very **gladly** spend and be spent for your souls..."

He was “glad.” He had joy, despite their treatment of him.

“Spend” means *expend*, and “spent” means *exhaust*. Paul expended himself to the point of exhaustion; the more he did, the less they loved him – but he did it “gladly.”

Expending yourself to the point of exhaustion for people who fail to appreciate you seems a sign of weakness.

Exactly! Now we’re getting it!

Five times in Chapter twelve Paul used the Greek word *astheneiais*. It is translated into three English words - *infirmities*, *weakness*, and *weak* - but it is the same Greek word. He didn’t *regret* being a weakling; he *rejoiced* in it!

Why?

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God’s strength was made perfect in Paul’s weakness; therefore he delighted in being a weakling.

We don’t ordinarily put much value on weakness. We don’t hire or promote people who are weaklings... We don’t vote for weaklings. Yet here was Paul, boasting about being a weakling.

Twice in verse seven Paul uses the phrase, “lest I be exalted above measure.” We love to measure things by using various standards. At school you measure using test scores and grades. At work you measure using sales and productivity figures. The standard of spiritual measure Paul used was weakness. God’s strength can only be made perfect in weakness; when you are weak, then and only then are you strong.

That brings us back to our original thought: You are expected to expend yourself to the point of exhaustion regardless whether you are appreciated or not.

All those times you’ve thought or said, “*I don’t have to take this,*” or “*I don’t deserve to be treated this way,*” or anything like that... **You’ve been wrong!**

Let’s ask this: Did Jesus deserve to be treated worse than a common criminal? Did He deserve to be beaten? Flogged? To be mocked, jeered, spat upon? Crucified?

Of course not! Jesus preeminently among all men didn’t deserve His treatment. **We** deserved His treatment.

It’s never a matter of what you may or may not deserve. It’s a matter of Who you are devoted to.

You’re devoted to Jesus. That leads us to two final principles.

First, Paul said, “And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you.” Let me fill-in the details of what he was saying.

Paul had refused to accept any money from the Church at Corinth for his ministerial services. He didn't want to burden them with his own needs. Even so, they accused him of being in the ministry for the money. He knew he wasn't; and he was wise enough to anticipate the accusation and refuse any local support.

Behind his words are an important spiritual principle: Paul had died to himself and his needs in order to concentrate on being helpful to others. He considered others better than himself – even if they didn't appreciate him for it.

The lack of appreciation was a small thing to Paul because he wasn't looking to receive anything from them.

You might be *un* or *under* appreciated. ***So what?*** The more you let the feeling fester, the more you prove that you have not died to yourself. The more you see your own selfishness.

You feel unloved, unappreciated. The person or people involved are therefore selfish, self-centered, thinking only of themselves, when they should see you for the saint you really are... And the minute you think that, *you are just as selfish, if not more, than they are!*

Paul used the example of parents sacrificing for their kids. It isn't as strong an example as it once was – because so many parents don't sacrifice, won't sacrifice, for their kids! But you get the idea: Whether your kids are grateful or ungrateful, you go on providing for them.

Second, Paul said, “I will very gladly spend and be spent **for your souls.**” He was in the business of soul-care; he wanted what was ultimately best for others. Paul looked ahead to the spiritual results of his expending himself to the point of exhaustion. Not just the results in their lives, but in his own. He knew God would approve him one day at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

In First Corinthians 4:5 Paul wrote,

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.

All of this life we are living will end one day in a very real Heaven – a Heaven more real than the seat you are sitting on and the building you’re seated in. Never lose sight of your future!

Warren Wiersbe once said, *“Heaven isn’t just a destination; it’s a motivation.”*

“Then each one’s praise will come from God.” Your wife might not appreciate you... Neither do your kids... Or your friends... Or the rest of your family... Or your fellow students and co-workers... Or the believers in your Church.

But you have an appointment to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. When you do, you want to hear His praise; you want to hear these words:

“Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

A life that does not hear those words cannot be considered successful.

For Paul to hear those words from the Lord meant a long period in his life spent being unloved and unappreciated.

It may mean the same for you. The next time you feel *un* or *under* appreciated; the next time you hear yourself starting to say, “I don’t deserve this,” rejoice and be glad!

Then begin to consider others better than yourself – even if it is those who should love you more. Die to yourself; it’s a decision. Expend yourself to the point of exhaustion. Think ahead to your appointment with Jesus and His evaluation of your sacrifices.