

FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

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March 30, 2004

Dear members and friends of FBF,

Just over a week ago, Army Ranger Pat Tillman made the “ultimate sacrifice” in his country’s service when he was killed in a firefght near Khost, Afghanistan. He was 27 years old.

Tillman had already made a newsworthy sacrifice two years before when he turned down a three-year, \$3.6 million offer to play for the NFL’s Arizona Cardinals. Instead, inspired by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the American homeland, he signed with the U.S. Army for an annual salary many times less than he would have made in a single quarter of one football game.

Although much has been written about Tillman since news of his death broke, I believe former Cardinals head coach Dave McGinnis’ brief comments best captured the basis for Tillman’s otherwise inexplicable sacrifice. “Pat knew his purpose in life. He proudly walked away from a career in football to a greater calling.”



People shake their heads in wonderment that someone with all the treasures and pleasures our prosperous and decadent society has to offer would leave it all behind for a life of hardship and danger. But Coach McGinnis has it right. Such sacrifice makes sense only if your life is grounded in a deeper purpose – a purpose deeper and bigger and more important than yourself.

Is there any other way to understand what motivates the Christian life, and the sense of personal sacrifice it so often entails? Our own Lord Jesus said of Himself, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45).

We are so thankful that Jesus fulfilled His purpose in life, even at the cost of suffering and death; even at the cost of bearing the sins of the world in judgment; even at the cost of taking my penalty and yours upon Himself. We are forever indebted to Him, “*who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father*” (Galatians 1:4).

And now, having come into an everlasting relationship with Him through faith, Jesus’ life is a pattern for our own. Because we are grounded in a purpose bigger than ourselves, it makes sense to subordinate the shallow desires of the flesh. When the Bible speaks of turning away from the seductions of the world (Romans 12:1-2), of stubbornly loving one another in the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 John 3:16), of the hard ministry of building up the faith of others (2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 2:16-17), of the grace of giving away our hard-earned money (Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:16), and even of worship itself (Hebrews 13:15), it uses the language of sacrifice.

And so they are sacrifices. No one in his right mind would do any of those things – unless his life was grounded in a purpose more important than himself. Others may shake their heads in wonderment, but the secret is in your sense of purpose.

“Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7-8)

Yours because His,

Chris