

Unselfishness

Screwtape Letter #26





Unselfishness

How will this affect
the other person?

Is this self-serving
or to serve others?

We gain in direct proportion
to the real help we give others

What is the devil up to?

Devil's scheme: Ambiguity

My dear Wormwood,
*Certainly, courtship is the time to plant the seeds that will eventually grow into domestic resentment a decade later. The allure of unfulfilled desire can lead to outcomes that humans might mistakenly attribute to acts of kindness. **Exploit the ambiguity of the word “Love”;** let them believe **they’ve resolved problems through Love when, in reality, they’ve merely set them aside or postponed them due to the enchantment of romance.** While this illusion lasts, you have the opportunity to secretly nurture these problems, making them chronic.*

Devil's scheme: Twisting Definitions and Focus

*The central issue to tackle is the concept of “unselfishness.” Take note of the excellent work done by our Philological Arm in substituting the **negative “unselfishness” for the Enemy’s positive Charity.** Use this to teach a man that he should give up benefits, not to make others happy, but to display his own unselfishness by sacrificing them. This is a significant accomplishment.*

Based on the excerpt, how is Unselfishness and Charity defined?

UNSELFISHNESS

- self-centered
- what i give up

CHARITY

- other-centered
- what others receive

Furthermore, when it comes to unselfishness, there is a noticeable difference in perspective between men and women. **A woman typically associates unselfishness with taking trouble for others, while a man sees it as not causing trouble for others.** Consequently, a woman deeply committed to the Enemy's cause might become a more considerable nuisance than most men, except those who have completely succumbed to Our Father's influence. In contrast, it often takes a man a long time within the Enemy's camp before he spontaneously engages in actions to please others, something an ordinary woman might do daily. Therefore, each sex, without apparent reason, can perceive the other as inherently selfish.

Woman

- taking trouble for others,
- doing things for others
- Serves without flare or announcement

Man

- not causing trouble for others
- Not likely to take up spontaneous unannounced good deeds
- Respects other people's rights

Devil's scheme: Unselfish Patterns in Relationships

*To add to this confusion, you can introduce a few more elements. The romantic enchantment creates mutual compliance where each is genuinely pleased to accommodate the other's wishes. They also know that the Enemy expects them to practice a level of charity that, if achieved, would result in similar behaviors. **You must convince them to establish, as a rule for their entire married life, a degree of mutual self-sacrifice that is currently emerging naturally due to the enchantment.** However, they won't have enough charity to continue this when the enchantment fades, and they won't see the trap because they mistake sexual excitement for charity and believe it will last.*

Devil's scheme: Unselfish Patterns in Relationships

*When discussing joint actions, it becomes obligatory for A to argue in favor of B's supposed desires while opposing his own, and vice versa. **Often, it's impossible to discern the true wishes of either party. Eventually, they end up doing something neither wants, with each feeling a self-righteous glow and harboring a secret claim to preferential treatment for their demonstrated unselfishness, along with a secret grudge against the other for accepting the sacrifice so easily.***

Colossians 3:17, 23

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men.

Later on, you can introduce what might be called the **Generous Conflict Illusion**. This game is best played with more than two players, such as a family with grown-up children. For something trivial, like having tea in the garden, one member makes it clear (though not explicitly) that they'd rather not but are willing to do so out of "unselfishness." The others promptly withdraw their suggestion, ostensibly due to their "unselfishness," but really because they don't want to be used as props for the first speaker's petty altruism. Yet he won't forgo his indulgence in unselfishness. He insists on doing "what the others want," and they insist on doing what he wants. This stirs up passions, leading someone to declare, "Very well then, I won't have any tea at all!" resulting in a real quarrel with bitterness on both sides. Do you see how it's done? **If they had each honestly fought for their own genuine desires, they would have remained courteous and reasonable. But since they're contending for the other side's desires, all the bitterness arising from thwarted self-righteousness and stubbornness, along with accumulated grudges from the past decade, remains hidden due to the nominal or official "unselfishness" they believe they're practicing.** Each side recognizes the superficiality of the adversary's unselfishness and the false position they're trying to impose, but each manages to feel righteous and wronged simultaneously, with no more dishonesty than is natural to humans.

**‘Unselfishness’
in an Asian
Family
presenting as
sacrifice and
guilt**



Although this movie is about a deaf family with a CODA (child of deaf adults), it actually tells a more delicate story of the love in a Chinese family. The keyboard that the father quietly brought home [for his daughter to replace an old broken one], the furrowed brow of the mother during the school parent meeting, these details reflect the ‘heavy love’ of a traditional Asian family.

Parents silently bear their worries, children try to sensibly suppress their self-expression. Facing the pressure of studying, employment, and marriage, we, as a generation, struggle in the gap between the sensible and selfish. It’s like a candle burning from both ends. One is the expectation of parents, and the other is our own ideals. In the middle is never-ending guilt. Every time we try to break free, we see their white hair and we shrink back. The so-called ‘lifting up’ is often mixed with these guilt and sacrifice. But in fact, true love is letting the other person live out themselves.

Is Selfishness the solution?

*As a wise human once said, “If people knew how much discord unselfishness causes, it wouldn’t be preached from the pulpit so often.” Furthermore, he remarked about a particular type of woman, “She’s the sort of woman who lives for others – you can always tell the others by their hunted expression.” These dynamics can be set in motion even during courtship. **A little genuine selfishness on your patient’s part can sometimes be more valuable in the long run for securing his soul than initiating the elaborate and self-conscious unselfishness that may eventually transform into what I’ve described.***

Biblical Unselfishness

Galatians 2:20

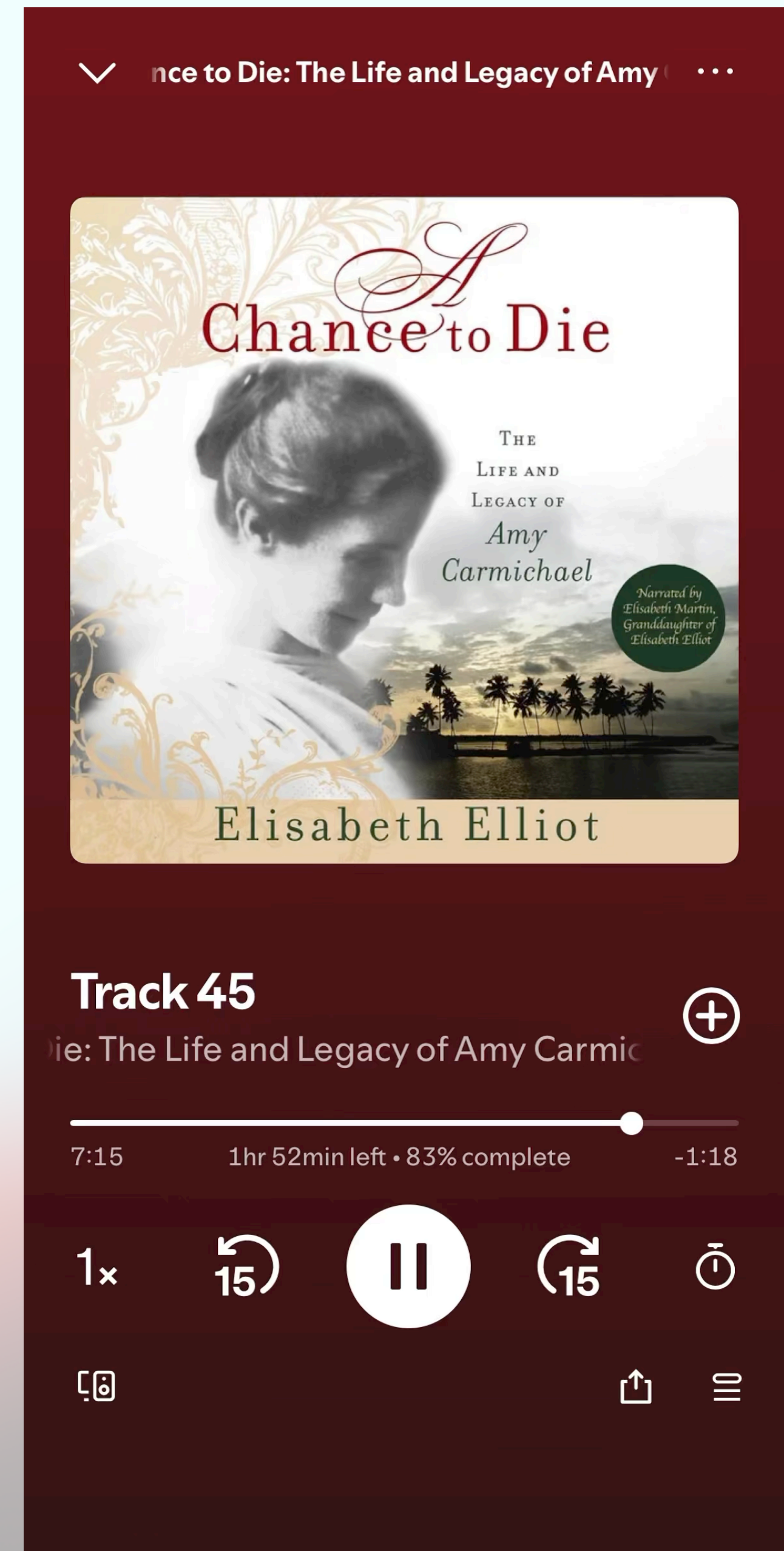
I have been crucified with Christ. it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Luke 17:10

“So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

“If it were possible to poll all the missionaries who have worked in all the world in all of Christian history, it would be seen that missionary work, most of the time, offers little that could be called ‘glamor’ What it does offer, as Amy wrote to prospective candidates in later years, is ‘a chance to die’. Or as Winston Churchill put his challenge during World War II, ‘blood, sweat, and tears’. It offers a great deal of plodding and plowing with now and then, a little planting. It is the promise of rejoicing, given to those who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed that gives heart. “

Elizabeth Elliot “*A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael*”



Unselfishness

DEVIL

self-conscious
unselfishness

GOD

No self
only love remains