

December 2025

Frank W. Nelte

### **ARE WE PREPARED TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES?**

Jesus Christ during His ministry knew that He was going to die by crucifixion. He referred to His own death on a number of occasions.

As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and **I lay down my life** for the sheep. (John 10:15)

Jesus Christ willingly laid down His life for all those human beings who will repent, both in this present age, and also in the millennium and in the time for people in the 2nd resurrection.

Therefore does My Father love Me, **because I lay down My life**, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but **I lay it down of Myself**. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. (John 10:17-18)

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because **He laid down His life for us**: and we ought (to be willing) **to lay down our lives for the brethren**. (1 John 3:16)

The Apostle John's instruction, that we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for church brethren, goes back to an instruction Jesus Christ gave a few hours before His own death. When He observed His last Passover with His disciples, Christ knew that He would die within the next 24 hours. At that point He gave His apostles their last instructions before His death. Jesus Christ said the following:

This is My commandment, **That you love one another**, as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

With the expression "to love one another" Jesus Christ was referring to **making sacrifices** for God's people, doing things for people, helping people. This is explained in the next two verses.

Greater love has no man than this, **that a man lay down his life for his friends**. You are my friends, **if you do whatsoever I command you**. (John 15:13-14)

The greatest love refers to the greatest sacrifice anyone can possibly make, which is to give one's life for other people. Jesus Christ would within hours lay down His life for those apostles (Judas was not present when Jesus Christ said these words, and Christ's sacrifice does not apply to Judas). Anyone who is not willing to do "whatsoever Jesus Christ commands us" to do, is also not Jesus Christ's "friend"; and Christ's sacrifice is not applied to those people who are not His "friends".

Earlier at that last Passover observance the Apostle Peter had said:

Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow You now? **I will lay down my life for Your sake.** (John 13:37)

The Apostle Peter certainly meant these words, but he was not yet fully repentant and he did not yet have God's spirit. So the account tells us that shortly after this Peter denied Jesus Christ three times. The historical records imply that decades later Peter also died as a martyr. So Peter did indeed end up laying down his own life for Jesus Christ.

## **TO LAY DOWN ONE'S LIFE**

Now here is what we need to understand in this discussion.

**To “lay down our lives” does not necessarily refer to dying for our beliefs.**

It may involve dying, and in the past it has very often involved people dying. And when Jesus Christ used this expression He was clearly referring to Himself dying for our sins. But this expression “to lay down our lives” does not necessarily involve dying for our beliefs.

This really comes down to **two completely different Greek words**, which regrettably are **both** translated into English as “life”. One of those two words really does mean “life”, and it has no other meaning. The **other Greek word** can be a reference to our physical life, but this second word really means much **more than just life**.

And that's where things get a bit complicated.

Now **it is always a problem** when our translators have translated two or more different O.T. Hebrew words with one English word. And it is also always a problem when our translators have translated two or more N.T. Greek words with one English word. And our translators have done this in many dozens of instances, with both Hebrew and Greek words. This has unavoidably created a considerable amount of confusion for various subjects.

Now **two different Hebrew or Greek words** only very rarely have the identical meaning, and they can in such rare cases both be translated by the one same English word. But in the majority of cases, translating two or more Hebrew or Greek words with one and the same English word, obscures some correct information. There are differences in meaning between the two Hebrew or Greek words, which **differences are lost** when both words are translated into English by the same one word.

Most commonly different words convey different meanings. Now here in the New Testament we are dealing with Greek words. So now let's look at the two different Greek words which are both translated

into English as “life”.

Let's start with a Scripture that somewhat clarifies the meaning of the more difficult one of these two Greek words. This will help us to see that this word really means more than just “life”.

### **MATTHEW 10:28**

And fear not them which **kill** the body (Greek “**soma**”), but are **not able to kill** the soul (Greek “**psuche**”): but rather fear Him who is **able to destroy** (Greek “**apolumi**”) both soul (Greek “**psuche**”) and body (Greek “**soma**”) in hell (Greek word for “**Gehenna** fire”). (Matthew 10:28)

Here is what Jesus Christ tells us in this specific verse.

1) The Greek word for “**body**” is “**soma**”. And “body” is a good translation of the Greek word. The body can be killed by other human beings, and obviously God can totally obliterate the human body in the lake of fire.

2) The Greek word for “**soul**” is “**psuche**”. Now “psuche” is something that other human beings are not able to kill! So when someone kills another person, then **the “psuche” of that person has not been killed or destroyed**. Now does that mean that “psuche” is something immortal? No. When it is a reference to a human being, “psuche” doesn't mean this at all! (Here we are not discussing the word “psuche” if it is applied to Jesus Christ.)

“Psuche” is not immortal at all. “**Psuite**” **can be destroyed**, obliterated, totally erased. But that destruction can **only** happen at the time of the 2nd death. That obliteration can only take place **in the lake of fire**, which will also burn up this entire present universe. And since “psuche” can be destroyed by the lake of fire, therefore “**psuche**” **cannot be automatically immortal**.

3) So “psuche” cannot be killed with a gun or sword or knife. But **it can be “killed”** in the lake of fire. However, the “psuche” of human beings **can also survive** exposure to the lake of fire. It is not that every “psuche” will automatically be destroyed by the lake of fire, not at all. It is only that **it can be** destroyed in the lake of fire. But this doesn't mean that it necessarily will be destroyed.

4) In the KJV “**psuche**” is translated as follows: **soul** = 58x, **life** = 40x, **mind** = 3x, **heart** = 1x, and in two places it is not translated. What these different words show is that the translators were not able to settle for one consistent meaning for the Greek word “psuche”. Let's keep in mind that “psuche” does not die when the body dies. It is something that human beings cannot destroy. But God can destroy “psuche” in the lake of fire.

**The soul is not mortal** at least up to the time of the lake of fire. But the **soul is not immortal either**, because God can kill it, though God can also bestow immortality on any soul.

5) The word “**soul**” is an **unfortunate translation** for “psuche”, because the word “soul” conjures up in people’s minds something like an immortal spirit, something that can waft around. Our English word “soul” comes with some baggage of association with immortality. That’s unfortunate.

On the internet I looked up various sources claiming to present the etymology of the word “soul”. Here is one explanation I found in the Century Dictionary for the word “soul”.

"**A substantial entity** believed to be that in each person which **lives, feels, thinks, and wills**"

Another statement I found says:

"The meaning ‘**disembodied spirit of a deceased person**’ is attested in Old English."

These statements represent some of the baggage attached to the word “soul”. All such statements do is confuse the picture. Now unfortunately I myself do not have a better one-word substitute for the word “soul”. So we’ll just stick with it, but being mindful of its misleading baggage.

Let’s look at another verse that distinguishes these words from one another.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* **your whole spirit** (Greek “pneuma”) and **soul** (Greek “psuche”) and **body** (Greek “soma”) be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

So according to this verse Paul implied that every human being has **three parts**: a body, a soul, and a spirit. Clearly Paul did not think of any of these three Greek words (soma, psuche, and pneuma) as a synonym for any of the other two words. Clearly Paul looked upon each of these three Greek words as referring to something different from the other two words.

For Paul “**the soul**” **was not the same as** “**the spirit**”, and Paul was certainly correct. There is a distinction between the soul and the spirit.

“**Soma**” refers to the **physical body**. “Soma” does not have any non-physical components, i.e. “soma” does not include any spirit component. It is flesh and blood. At death this body decomposes and goes back to the earth. That body will never exist again. When people in the 2nd resurrection are given a physical body, then that will not be identical to the body they had when they died. It will be a new physical body.

“**Pneuma**” refers to the **spirit in man**, which God gives to every human baby at birth. This is the part that gives us a unique identity, and enables us to think and reason on the human level. This is the part that records and preserves everything about us. This is the part that God will put into a new body at the resurrection: at the 1st resurrection into a spirit body, and at the 2nd resurrection into a new physical

body. "Pneuma" will then impart identity to that new body. **By itself**, i.e. without being placed in a body, **"pneuma" has no consciousness or awareness or identity**. It needs to be in a body in order to function and to be relevant.

**"Psuche"** refers to the combination of "soma" and "pneuma" with a specific focus. **That focus is on the potential** which God has established for that combination of body and spirit. "Psuche" (i.e. the word "soul") presents to that combination of body and spirit **the potential to live for ever with God**, as a part of the very Family of God. That potential is very closely linked to **the way we conduct our lives**, how we live day-in and day-out, and how we respond to God. This word "psuche" is used to refer to a whole being, what we are like as individuals, and how we conduct our lives, how our minds function and operate.

So **the spirit in man** gives us **the ability** to function on the human level. And **the soul** records **how** we make use of that ability.

Put another way:

1) The meaning of the word **"body"** is self-explanatory. That's the part of us that is seen by other people.

2) The word **"spirit"** refers to the spirit in man, which God gives to every person at birth. When this spirit is added to the body at birth, then it empowers that body to function on the human level.

For what man knows **the things of a man**, save (i.e. **except for**) **the spirit of man** which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but (by) the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

We understand things on the human level only because we have the spirit of man within us. Without it we could not function as human beings.

In the Book of Job the man Elihu said to Job:

But **there is a spirit in man**: and the inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding. (Job 32:8)

And this spirit in man **leaves the body at death**, to return to God who had given it at birth.

*There is no man that has power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.* (Ecclesiastes 8:8)

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and **the spirit shall return unto God who gave it**.

(Ecclesiastes 12:7)

3) The word “**soul**” then refers to **the effect that is achieved** when a body and the spirit in man are combined. “Soul” refers to the functioning human being that has **the potential to become a God-Being**, as a member of God’s Family. And that process of the spirit in man working in a human body involves **the entire life experience**.

Whereas the spirit in man itself is neutral, with no relationship with God, neither good nor bad, **it is the soul** (psuche) **that takes a stand for or against God**.

The spirit in man makes the human mind possible. But the word “**soul**” is used to express **how** the human mind puts the spirit in man to use, to identify how the spirit in man responds to God. In other words, it is the soul that expresses **control over the human mind**.

Now there isn’t actually something specific there, when we talk about “the soul”. It is not a tangible entity, and neither is it a specific spirit entity. “Soul” refers to **the functioning combination** of two other things (i.e. the body and the spirit in man).

When we want to talk about **human abilities** to plan, think, reason and carry out intentions, then we are speaking about the abilities which **the spirit in man** brings to the party.

But when we are speaking about the **actual activities** of planing, thinking, doing, activities we engage in by using our minds, by putting the spirit in man to use, then we are speaking about **the soul**. When we use the spirit in man to do things, then the word “soul” applies. The word “soul” indicates the result of the body and the spirit in man working together to establish our very lives. “The soul” expresses how we live our lives.

And it is the activities we decide to engage in, which present the potential for immortal life in God’s Family to us. It is the “soul” that can grasp the potential destiny to become immortal, which potential destiny God has set before us human beings. And “the activities” that present that potential amount to living our lives according to all of God’s laws.

After the millennium and **at the end of the 100-year period** God will divide all the mortal human beings alive at that point in time into two distinct groups. One group will be those people who are fully repentant at that point in time. The other group will be all the people who have not come to repentance. And God will deal differently with each group.

A) **For those human beings who truly repented** and consciously changed the way they use their minds, those who are in full agreement with, and submission to the laws of God, for those human beings God will give them a new spirit body and place their spirit in man into that spirit body. In so doing “**the soul**” **of those individuals will become immortal**, meaning that their future immortality in the Family of God is made certain. And when they are immortal, then their “soul” is also immortal.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Matthew 25:34)

(Comment: In another article I explain the expression “the foundation of the world”. The expression “foundation of the world” is in fact a mistranslation.)

**B) Those human beings who are not repentant at the end of their lives**, at whatever time after the flood they may have lived, those people will be thrown into the lake of fire. That fire will destroy both, their physical bodies and their souls (i.e. it destroys **the potential they once had**).

For the people in this category who will not be alive at that point in time (i.e. people who lived in the period from the flood at Noah’s time up to the time of Christ’s 2nd coming, and who committed the unpardonable sin), they will be resurrected with a new physical body, into which God will place their spirit in man. And then they are immediately thrown into the lake of fire. They had not responded to the offer of immortality that God had presented to them. And at that point **their “soul” will be destroyed in the lake of fire**.

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, **depart from Me**, you cursed, **into** everlasting (Greek “**age-lasting**) **fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matthew 25:41)

### **A WRONG INTERPRETATION**

At this point I should clarify a technically correct translation in this verse which gives most readers an incorrect picture. The expression “prepared **for** the devil and ...” is a correct translation of the Greek “etoimasmenon **to** diabolo ...”, “to diabolo” being the dative case in Greek.

However, many people look at this expression “prepared **for** the devil ...” and assume that this refers to the devil being thrown **into** that fire. But that is not what this expression means. A major meaning of our English preposition “for” is “**on account of**”, or put another way, “**because of**”. In this verse Jesus Christ was **not referring to who** this fire is for! Rather, with this statement Jesus Christ was revealing **the reason why** God will bring on this age-lasting fire.

And it is likely to take a considerable amount of time for the whole universe to be totally burned up. It can certainly be referred to as “**an age-lasting fire**”. After all, 1000 years are like a day to God (2 Peter 3:8). It’s not like this universe will burn up in 30 minutes flat. God has a different perspective of time, when compared to how we perceive time. And that whole burning experience may well amount to “an age” of 1000 years or more. But at that point time will no longer be an issue, when only spirit beings will exist.

The fire will burn up everything physical. But fire cannot in any way harm spirit beings. That fire is to destroy certain physical human beings, as well as the entire universe. So in this verse Jesus Christ tells us: **the reason why** there will be a fire that will burn up this entire present universe is that Satan and his demons rebelled against God, and their rebellion severely damaged this universe. And that is why God the Father will burn it up and replace it with “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). That fire

will burn up this universe **on account of** what Satan and his demons had done.

The reference to Satan being thrown into a lake of fire just prior to the second resurrection is in Revelation 20:10. Matthew 25:41 refers to **a different fire**. At the time of the fire Jesus Christ is referring to Satan will in fact be permanently banished into “the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 1:13).

There will be two different fires, and Satan is only thrown in to the first one. He is not thrown into the second fire, the age-lasting one. At that point Satan is banished into permanent blackness instead of being thrown into a fire.

It would have been better for the translators to have rendered this statement in Matthew 25:41 as “... into age-lasting fire, prepared **because of** the devil and his angels.”

### **CONTINUING WITH MATTHEW 25:41**

**The purpose of the lake of fire** is to completely erase everything that was wrong, damaged, evil and rebellious. The purpose of the lake of fire is also to **totally erase the memory** of all those human beings who will be destroyed in that lake of fire. We will never sorrow over those people who rebelled against God and who were destroyed. From after that age-lasting fire onwards we will not remember that those people ever existed (see Obadiah 1:16).

The purpose of the lake of fire is also to completely erase the knowledge of all the evils that we human beings caused during the approximately 7100-year period of physical human existence. Then God will create the new heaven and the new earth, and in that creation everything will be perfect and flawless.

So think of the word “**soul**” as referring to: **our lives including our potential destiny to live forever**. The expression “**spirit in man**” refers to the power that is imparted to our physical brains, **the power** to function on the human level.

Where the word “**spirit**” refers to a **power** that is given to human beings, the word “**soul**” refers to **the entire life-experience**, including the potential for immortal life. “Soul” refers to exercising the power which the spirit in man has made available.

Now let’s get back to human beings not being able to kill the soul:

If somebody kills us, then our physical lives have come to an end. It is the body that has been killed. But the people who kill us cannot take from us **the potential** for God to resurrect us, to have a part in God’s Family for all future eternity. That potential **continues to exist** after we have been killed. And when God resurrects us at the time of the resurrection, then that potential will become reality. And in biblical terms it is the word “soul” that refers to that potential.



## THE WORD “SOUL” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The translators of the Bible created some unnecessary confusion around the word “soul”. In the Old Testament they translated the **Hebrew** word “**nephesh**” as “soul”. And in the New Testament they translated the **Greek** word “**psuche**” as “soul”. In so doing they created the impression that the Hebrew word “nephesh” means the same as the Greek word “psuche”.

**But that is simply not correct!**

Hebrew “nephesh” and Greek “psuche” do not mean the same thing. But the translators didn’t understand that, because they didn’t understand the meaning God attached to the Greek word “psuche”. And scholars typically agree with the translators. So scholars will disagree with the things I will now say.

In the Old Testament it was God who said:

“the soul (**nephesh**) that sins it **shall die**” in Ezekiel 18, verses 4 and 20. And Joshua 10:28 shows that Joshua “**utterly destroyed** them, and all the souls (**nephesh**) that were therein ...”.

So in the Old Testament God used the word “**nephesh**” to refer to something that **is mortal**, something that **can be killed** by other human beings. Jesus Christ was the God who had spoken the words in Ezekiel 18:4.

And in the New Testament Jesus Christ said:

“Don’t fear those who are **not able to kill** the soul (**psuche**)” in Matthew 10:28.

Jesus Christ tells us that Hebrew “nephesh” refers to something that human beings **can kill**. And Jesus Christ tells us that Greek “psuche” refers to something that human beings **cannot kill**.

Therefore the Hebrew word “**nephesh**” **does not really have the same meaning as** the Greek word “**psuche**”, even if dictionaries say otherwise. Jesus Christ in the New Testament did not contradict something He had said in the Old Testament. It is how Jesus Christ used the word “psuche” in the NT that establishes the differences between psuche and nephesh, i.e. when we compare nephesh in Ezekiel 18:4 with psuche in Matthew 10:28.

The truth is that **the meanings of “nephesh” and “psuche” overlap**. But in the New Testament Greek “psuche” has **an added component** which does not apply to Hebrew “nephesh”. “Psuche” is a bigger word than “nephesh”.

Please understand that the things I say about “the soul” in this article apply only to the New Testament

uses of the word “soul”. They do not apply to the Old Testament uses of the Hebrew word “nephesh”, which is unfortunately also translated as “soul”.

Right, now let's get back to the subject of laying down our lives.

### **THE GREEK WORD “ZOE”**

The Greek word “zoe” is used 134 times in the New Testament. In the KJV it is translated 133 times as “**life**”, and one time as “**lifetime**”. This is in Luke 16:25, where Abraham says to the rich man:

But Abraham said, Son, remember that you in your **lifetime** (Greek “zoe”) received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. (Luke 16:25)

Here it really should also have been translated as “life”. So this word “zoe” has only one meaning. Now this Greek word “**zoe**” **is never used** in the expression “to lay down our lives”.

Let's have a look at a few places where “zoe” is used.

And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit **everlasting** (Greek “aionion”) **life** (Greek “zoen”). (Matthew 19:29)

(“Zoen” is the accusative of the Greek noun “zoe”.)

When referring to “everlasting life”, then the NT Greek always uses the word “zoe” for “life”. It never says “the everlasting psuche”. “Zoe” only has one meaning, and that one meaning is “life”.

Jesus says unto him, **I am** the way, the truth, and **the life** (Greek “he zoe”): no man comes unto the Father, but by Me. (John 14:6)

Jesus Christ is “zoe”, but for humanity He is not “psuche”. “Psuche” is not really an appropriate word for “life”.

We could look at many more Scriptures that make the point, that in the New Testament Greek text the word that only means “life” is “zoe”. It has no other meanings.

**But “zoe” is not what we are instructed to lay down for other church members!**

When a person is killed, then “zoe” comes to an end. But when a person is killed “psuche” does not

come to an end.

**And what we are instructed to lay down for others is our “psuche”.**

We are instructed to lay down something that cannot be killed by any human being. Even when someone kills us, our psuche continues to exist. It follows that we are not really instructed to lay down **something that cannot be killed**. If we are killed, then **our lives** come to an end. But **our souls** continue to exist. In fact, our souls continue to exist, whether we are alive or whether we have died.

This means that the command **to lay down our souls** has nothing to do with whether we live or whether we die ... because our souls will continue to exist at least up to the time of the lake of fire. At that point in time the souls of all those human beings from the time of the flood up to that point in time (except for the 144000 in the first resurrection) who are changed into spirit beings will be made immortal by God. And all the souls of those who end up in the lake of fire will be destroyed in that fire. (For those in the first resurrection their souls are made immortal at the time when they receive immortal life.)

### **SO WHAT ARE WE EXPECTED “TO LAY DOWN”?**

Let's go back to our original Scriptures. **What did John mean** when he wrote **“we ought to lay down our lives** (Greek “psuche”) **for the brethren”**? (see 1 John 3:16 again.)

John did not mean that we ought to be prepared to die for the brethren, because then he should have used the plural of “zoe”, and not the word “psuche”. It is “zoe” that dies when the body dies. This is not to say that in the past some people have not been called on to die for helping or protecting other church members. And that may perhaps come about again in the dangerous times that lie ahead. Time will tell.

But that is not the point John is making in his letter.

When we lay down our “psuche” for other people, then we are establishing **new priorities** in our lives. It means that **we focus on trying to help and serve** the brethren with the things we do and the things we say.

**Understand also that actually dying for someone else does not achieve anything at all.** If we die for someone else, that will not make life any better or less persecuted for that “someone else”. Jesus Christ laid down His life for us, to pay for our sins, to enable us to be reconciled to God the Father. But us dying for someone else doesn't reconcile that person or those persons to God the Father. **Our death is simply not able to achieve anything for other people.** Our theoretical death would not bring anyone else even a teeny-weeny little bit closer to the Father. Our death would achieve nothing for other people.

So it is not that we give our lives for some enemy to kill us, and thereby we somehow help “the

brethren". It is that **we use our "psuche"**, all the things we do in life, while we are alive, **to help the brethren**.

We lay down our "psuche", and not our "zoe", by **living a life of service** to others, converting our attitude of concern for others into actions in our lives.

And that is precisely what the Apostle John himself was doing. He was not dying when he wrote this. He had used his life, the previous approximately 60 years, to serve the people who were being called into the Church by God.

**John "laid down his psuche" by serving the people of God** with teaching and instruction and guidance and setting an example. He laid down his "psuche" by helping God's people in any way he could, as did also the other apostles.

It wasn't a matter of dying. It really was a matter of doing good for the people of God. **A life of service** from the heart amounts to "laying down our lives". It amounts to "laying down our lives" because **we are not seeking our own will**. We "lay down our lives" (really psuche) when we strive to please God in the best way we can.

We are submitting our whole life experience to seeking to please God. That amounts to "laying down our lives".

Another way to refer to "laying down our lives" is to say: **we are giving our lives to God**. And that is really what we agreed to do when we were baptized, to give our very lives to God, to do His will, to always seek to please Him.

Now **for some people in the past** this attitude of "giving our lives to God" included **those people being killed** for their commitment to God. But that is not the first focus or intent of the instruction to "lay down our souls".

The primary focus of God's calling is that **we are to live as a light** to this world. We are to commit our lives to putting God first in our lives. God wants us **to live Christianity**, to set good examples for the world. Jesus Christ died for the world, but that is not something we can do.

This is what Paul also wrote to the Romans.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

Normally the word "sacrifice", when applied to a person, implies that the person will die. But in most cases that is not what God has called us to do. Rather, God expects all of us to become "living sacrifices". This refers to **living the Christian life**. And such a life amounts to **"laying down our souls"**.

for the brethren”.

Remember that it is “our souls” we are to lay down, rather than “our lives”.

It is **how** we live our lives that determines whether or not we are laying down “our souls” for God’s people. There are different ways to refer to the Christian life, but they all focus on the same things. Thus:

There are 4 different instructions:

- to **let our light shine**,
- to **have good works** in our lives,
- to **lay down our lives**,
- to become **living sacrifices**,

... and they all refer to exactly the same thing. All four **refer to living the Christian life** as an example to our communities, looking for opportunities to do good, and seeking to please God in everything we do.

Where “letting our light shine” and “having good works” and becoming “living sacrifices” clearly refer to how we live, the expression “lay down our lives” **seems to focus on dying** for our commitment to God. “Laying down our souls” instead of “laying down our lives” already removes that wrong focus to some degree.

But a focus on dying for our beliefs is not really the focus of this or any other specific instruction in the Bible. Rather, **what we “sacrifice”** when we lay down our souls **is self will**. We strive to put down self will, and strive to replace it with seeking God’s will, as a regular part of our daily lives.

For some of God’s servants laying down their souls has involved them dying for being servants of God (e.g. the O.T. prophets). But that is not the main focus for all the people who become true Christians. For most of us the focus is on **how we live**, how we put God’s way of life into action in our own daily lives.

And **that focus amounts to “laying down our souls”**. Are we committed to doing that? Are we committed to holding fast to that calling? We must hold fast to it.

Frank W Nelte