

## "MORE THAN THESE?"

During the three and a half years of our Lord Jesus' ministry, the disciples who had sacrificed reputation, business, etc., to devote time and energy to heralding Messiah's presence and the establishment of his kingdom, had necessarily crude ideas regarding the manner and time of their Master's exaltation, and their exaltation with him as joint-rulers. It was quite sufficient, too, that they should faithfully take each step as it became due; hence the Master told them not all that he knew, but little by little as they could bear it – saying to them, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Who can tell how great was their disappointment, when they saw him whose kingdom and glory they had been declaring, ruthlessly murdered, and that as a felon. What though they knew him to be a "good man, mighty in word and deed," falsely accused and wrongfully crucified, this did not alter the fact that their long cherished national hopes of a Jewish king who would restore their nation to influence and power, were dashed suddenly. Yes, and their own individual hopes, ambitions and air-castles of important offices on the right and left of this king, in whose service they had left all else to engage – these were all suddenly and ruthlessly demolished by the unfavorable turn which matters had suddenly taken in the crucifixion of the expected king.

Well did the Master know how desolate and aimless and perplexed they would feel at and after his crucifixion, for thus it was written by the Prophet: "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." And during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, it was therefore his chief concern to gather them again and to re-establish their faith in him as the long-looked-for Messiah, by proving to them the *fact* of his resurrection, that he that *was* dead had come to life again, and that since his resurrection, though retaining the same individuality, he was "*changed*," and was no longer a human but a spiritual being, with all that this "change" implied, illustrating it by his appearing or

manifesting himself in different forms and then vanishing from their sight. He also corrected their misapprehensions and kept them from going back to former occupations, by making them further acquainted with their future work.

It is interesting to note how our Lord gave this instruction – not all at once, hastily, but little by little, and in such manner as to make the deepest impressions. Though we know of only seven appearances during those forty days, and those but brief, we cannot doubt that he was often invisibly present with them, hearing them express their doubts and fears and hopes and wishes, yet manifesting himself to their sight only when he had some lesson to impart which would best be given in that way.

He broke the news of his resurrection gradually to them through the Marys, to whom he first revealed himself – women naturally catching more quickly than men the truth in such a matter. Then he overtook [R941 : page 3] two of the sad, downcast disciples as they walked into the country, and as a friend inquired the cause of their trouble and despondency. Their hearts overflowed at the touch of his sympathy, and they told him of their Master who had been crucified three days before. They told how they had been with him for over three years, having left former employment and made themselves foolish in the eyes of their fellow men by believing that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed God's anointed, mentioned in the prophecies as the one who should re-establish their nation, and finally rule and bless the world. Ah! said they sadly, this is what we "*had hoped,*" but these hopes, and our own personal ambitions, founded on his promises that *we should reign with him*, are all suddenly dashed. We cannot tell you how we feel – we have no heart, no ambition left for anything. After having such great expectations, the ordinary things of life seem common and distasteful. Our Master seems to have deceived both himself and us, for he was truly a good man, "mighty in word and deed before God and all the people."

Then the stranger preached them a stirring sermon from the prophecies, showing them that the very things which had so disheartened them were the things which the prophets had foretold concerning the true Messiah, – that before he could rule and bless and lift up Israel and the world, he must first redeem them with his own life from the curse of death, which came upon all through Adam, and that afterward, raised to life and glory by Jehovah, their Master would fulfill *all* that is written by the prophets of glory and honor, as well as shame and death.

A wonderful preacher and a wonderful sermon was that: It started new ideas and opened new expectations and hopes. Years afterward they remembered it, and drew strength and hope from it, and said, "Did not our hearts *burn* within us while he talked with us by the way and while he opened to us the Scriptures."

Again he appeared to the disciples, except Thomas, assembled in an upper room. And again, Thomas having said he would not believe unless the Master should appear and show the nail prints and the spear mark, our Lord did appear just so, and showed that he could as easily appear so, as in any other form, and that he wanted to meet every reasonable doubt with satisfactory proof. Yet he also showed Thomas, and all, that *he* was no longer flesh, but spirit, by vanishing from their sight.

Five weeks after the crucifixion, when the excitement of that event and of the appearances of the risen Lord had passed off, the practical questions of life began to present themselves to the disciples. They gradually settled down to the conviction that though somehow God had been doing something with them, and had used them somewhat in his service, yet that whatever it accomplished, that work was at an end. Peter, the oldest, and James and John, the youngest of the disciples, had formerly been partners in the fishing business, and had left their boats and nets at the Master's call to become "fishers of men." These at Peter's suggestion formed their partnership anew, taking with them Thomas,

and Nathanael (he whom Jesus termed "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile," who though not one of the apostles was one of the "brethren"), and two other of the disciples, probably Andrew and Philip.

They knew not what a turning point that was in their lives. Hear Peter, usually a leader and spokesman among them, address the others, saying: Brethren, we must do something, we cannot spend the remainder of life as we have recently been doing. We followed the Master, and taught from city to city that the King had come and that the kingdom of God was at hand, to be set up in glory and power. And though we still have evidence that our Master was Jehovah's special messenger, and that divine favor still rests upon him and has raised him from the dead, yet, after all that has happened, we certainly cannot go about now with the same message – we would be adjudged insane. From the four manifestations of our Lord made to us shortly after his resurrection, we got new hopes and thoughts, and wondered whether he would not after all somehow continue the work. But still, all things move on as usual, and we see no sign of his kingdom, and he has not even *appeared* to any of us for a long time now. So my counsel is that we seven, bound by unusual sympathy, become partners in the fish business, and in some degree bury our hopes of kingdom honors. And they all assented.

Arrangements made, boats, nets, etc., procured, they make a fresh start at the old business. Who can doubt that the Lord was among them often, whilst they were preparing, and that he had all things arranged which would make this a valuable lesson. If they should have great success and become swallowed up with interest in the business, they would soon be unfit for the higher service, yet if they should have no success, it would seem like forcing them, so the Lord adopted a plan which taught them a lesson which he often teaches all his followers, viz., that the success or failure of our efforts in any direction he can control if he please.

They toiled all night and caught not a fish and began to feel disheartened. A stranger on shore calls to them to know of their success. Poor success! they answer, Caught nothing! Ah! says the stranger, now cast your net on the other side the boat and try. No use, stranger, answers one, we have tried both sides all night long, and if there were fish on one side, there would be on the other. But we will try again and let you see. They did so and got an immense haul. It is strange, said some! but the quick and impressible John at once got the correct idea, and said, Brethren, the Lord only could do this; don't you remember the feeding of the multitudes, etc.? That must be the Lord on shore and this is another way, "another form" and time, that he has chosen to manifest himself to us. Don't you remember too that it was just so when the Lord first called us? Then, too, we had toiled all night and caught nothing until he told us, "Let down your nets for a draught" (Luke 5:4-9). Yes, surely that is the Lord, notwithstanding we do not recognize him by his *appearance* and form, since his resurrection. He now appears in a variety of forms, but we know each time, that it is he, by some peculiar circumstance like this.

And when they got to shore, they found that Jesus had bread as well as fish, and learned the lesson, that under his direction and care, they would not be left to starve, because he "knoweth that ye have *need* of these things." They did not ask him, if he were the Lord; for on this as on other occasions, the eyes of their understanding being opened, they *knew* him, though he had "*another form*," different from the one they had been used to seeing before he died. – John 21:12.

This was the Lord's opportunity to impress a lesson upon them all, so specially addressing Peter, the leader, pointing to the fish, and boats, and nets, he said, Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these? \* You left these things once to follow me and be a fisher of men; have you changed your mind, Peter? Are you *sure* which you love most – me and my service, or this business to which you have returned? When our Lord asked this the third time, it began to imply to poor Peter that the tendency with him was to love and serve business more than Christ.

And he no doubt remembered also the *three* times he had denied the Lord. Peter was grieved; he felt remorse, and no wonder, but he immediately threw himself upon the Lord's mercy and answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things," thou knowest my weaknesses, yet "Thou knowest that I love thee." Then said Jesus, Feed my sheep and lambs; make that, not fishing, your business, Peter. Peter heeded and left the fishing business, and while feeding the flock over whom God had made him an overseer, *proved* by his faithfulness even unto death in his service, that he did really and truly love the Lord more than the fishing business, and that his love was not in word only, but in *deed* and in *truth*.

\*Some have supposed that our Lord's question referred to the other disciples standing about – that he asked Peter whether he loved him more than the other disciples loved him. But such a supposition is quite unreasonable. Our Lord would not ask Peter a question which he could not answer; for how could Peter tell the depth of love which his fellow disciples bore for the Master. Neither would our Lord ask a question so impolite, for it would certainly be very unkind to ask one friend among others, whether he loved more than they. And furthermore the structure of the Greek indicates that the comparison is with impersonal, inanimate things; such as nets, boats, etc., would be.

Had Peter continued in the fishing business and neglected the sheep and the lambs, which the great Shepherd had asked him to seek out and feed, would his actions not have *contradicted* his reply to our Lord's question – "Thou knowest that I love thee" above all? This would have been loving in *word*, but not in *deed* and in *truth*. (See 1 Jno. 3:18.) Had this been the course of the apostles, had they loved the Lord with their mouths, or professedly only, and not *acted* in harmony with their profession, we know they would not have been acceptable as members of the body of Christ; they would have been "castaways" from the heavenly calling. Called, but not faithful to the conditions of the call, they would not be among the chosen. Had their love for the Lord been overcome by their love for business, or **[R941 : page 4]** honor, or family pride, or love of peace and ease, they would have been "drowned," or "choked," and would have become unfruitful. And what would thus

have been true of them, applies with equal force to us who are now living in the world, the consecrated, anointed representatives of the Shepherd, to seek and feed his scattered and starving sheep. [R942 : page 4]

The Lord tells us that he is seeking a choice little flock to be his Bride, to be with him and to behold and share his glory; and he tells us the character of the class he seeks, and that he will have no others. He tells us plainly (Matt. 10:34-38.) that such as love business, pleasure, self, ease, honor of men, or family, or even life itself, more than they love him, so that they would not sacrifice *more* for him and his word than for these, are NOT WORTHY to be of the class he is *now* selecting.

Let us be very much in earnest, dear brethren and sisters, fellow racers for the first grand prize. We cannot serve both God and mammon; we will please neither, if we try it. We will by a half-hearted service fail even to please the world, get its chief favors; and more than all, surely the Bridegroom would accept of and crown as an overcomer and his joint-heir, no such faint-heart. Let us not deceive ourselves; that is *love* in truth, which works by deeds and sacrifices, and consists not of professions of love merely. Let us each, then, scan carefully his own life. Let each ask himself how his life must seem to the Master's eye. What does he who reads the thoughts and *intents* of the heart see to be your chiefest love, your chiefest aim in life? The world or even loving brethren, not knowing the heart, might misjudge you, but the Lord knows, and you should also know – whether you love him and his will *more* than self, family, business, etc. Let us not deceive ourselves, unless our love is active and full of that joy which esteems it a privilege to bear the cross in following Christ, it is not the supreme motive of our hearts.

Do not dodge the question, it is all important – answer the Lord's question: "Lovest thou me more than these?" And if you answer with Peter, "Yea, Lord," then like Peter obey the call, Feed my sheep and lambs, rather than the calls of business, the world, the flesh, and the

devil to selfishness and ease. So, like Peter, you shall be accounted meet [worthy] for the inheritance of the saints in light, and to be confessed by the Master as his fellow overcomer and joint-heir, before his Father and the holy messengers. – Col. 1:12; Rev. 3:5.

Do not offer as an excuse for not feeding the sheep, that there are others more capable of feeding them, and you prefer to let them do it. That is not the language of love. The loving servant will anxiously inquire, Lord, *how much* can I do? Show me how to manage my temporal affairs and how to cultivate my one or many talents to secure the largest possible results in thy service. The Chief Shepherd is responsible, and he will see to it that every true sheep shall now get the "meat in due season," whether *you* do what you can in the service or not. The question is, Will you accept of the honor of sacrificing other interests in his service to which he thus invites you, and thereby *prove* your love for him to be SUPREME, above all other loves. He is passing by the great and wise and prudent, according to the wisdom of this age and is calling to his service just such as you (Matt. 11:25). This has *always* been his plan from the first. He chooses "babes" who will babble forth the truth unceremoniously, to confound the wise and great, while, as it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." – 1 Cor. 3:19; Job 5:13.

The worldly-wise are often ensnared by their *own* boasted wisdom, or rather conceit, which from God's standpoint is foolishness. So then, no matter how unlearned any may be in earthly learning, no matter how uncouth in speech and address, no matter how many are more able naturally to represent the shepherd and call and feed the sheep in his name, let each appreciate his own privilege of showing his love for the shepherd, by laying down time, influence, money, yea, life itself, in feeding the sheep. Such shall be approved and accepted of the Master as his joint-heirs, no matter how humble and ignoble and unworthy they may be now, in the eyes of the world.

It is thus – in the service of the church, our fellow sheep, that we are exhorted by the apostle to sacrifice present interests, when he says, As Christ laid down his life for us, we ought *also* to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16). We begin laying down life, by laying down luxuries and worldly advantages and end the service with the actual death of our human self. It was to this, the great business of life, that Paul exhorted believers to consecrate themselves, saying: "I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." – Rom. 12:1.

How many of the Lord's professed followers are to-day making fishing for earthly things of some sort, the chief business of life – fishing for money, or influence, or a great name, or self-gratification, or some thing of the sort – leaving the great work which the Master gave all his followers, viz., to be fishers of men, feeders of his sheep and lambs.

True, all are not apostles, as Peter, and all are not called to such special service, as his, requiring all their time. But each one is called upon to improve and use whatever openings and opportunities he does possess in preaching the good tidings. The apostle Paul said, we should follow his example, which was truly worthy and noble; and Peter refers to all the members of the body of Christ, as the "Royal Priesthood" that "should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9.) This should be the chief business of all the saints. To this work *we* were anointed as members of the body of Christ by the same spirit which anointed our Head, and for the same purpose. See what was the purpose of his anointing, and learn therefrom the purpose of your own anointing under him. It is written of him, and of us as members of him, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, *because* he hath anointed me TO PREACH THE GOSPEL to the meek." – Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18.

We have no hesitation in saying that every member of the anointed body of Christ will be a *preacher* of the gospel, though probably few of them will be of those known as "clergymen." The fact is, that those who

have the truth and are governed by its spirit, could not avoid preaching as much as they have opportunity. Such will not need pay (neither money, honor, nor flattery), as inducement to enter the ministry (service) of the gospel, but would be glad to preach regardless of these and even at a loss of honor, money, etc., like Paul counting it joy to be considered worthy to suffer loss for the truth's sake, and to be God's ambassadors. The spirit of the truth had taken firm hold of some in the early church whom the Apostle addressed saying: "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions," "Ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions," "and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." (Heb. 10:32-34.) True, earnest preachers imbued with the spirit of the truth were those also, mentioned in Acts 8:4. In the persecution for the truth they hid not their light under a bushel, but openly declared the truth; therefore they were scattered abroad. But even as exiles, "they went *everywhere preaching the word.*" They *all* preached, but seldom did they get a chance to preach in a synagogue, and few probably had ability for *public* speaking. They preached as Jesus and the disciples did, from house to house, or by the wayside, wherever they found hungry hearts and hearing ears – the "meek."

Why was it that these and the apostles did not say to themselves: We must be *prudent*, and not let it be known that we believe this gospel; for we have our business and family interests to attend to, and if we are zealous for the gospel, it will result in breaking up our business prospects, and we and our families will be unpopular and may be driven from home or cast into prison – Why did they not reason thus? We answer, because they had the *spirit* of the truth, the holy anointing was on them and they *delighted* to do God's will, and to be engaged in his service at any cost. Peter and John, when commanded to preach this gospel no more, answered, "We cannot [help] but speak, the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Paul tells how the fire of the truth and its service was burning in his heart and must find vent through his mouth, cost it what it might and did, when he says: Woe is me [Wretchedly unhappy would I be], if I preach not the gospel of Christ. To be obliged to keep silent and not declare the boundless love

and glorious plan of God, would have been misery indeed to Paul, while he could rejoice with *joy unspeakable*, if permitted to preach it, even at the cost of home, comforts, fame, honor, wealth and "all things."

### **YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE.**

None should gather from the foregoing, that God expects the same service from each of the consecrated, regardless of talents and opportunities. There is just one sense in which *the same* exactly is expected of each; that is, each to be accounted worthy of joint-heirship with Christ must DO WHAT HE CAN. Those who have one talent, may do what they can as really and truly and as acceptably with God, as those who have ten talents, who at most can do no more. And none who have consecrated *all*, and who have seen how little their *all* is, in comparison to the favors of God, past, present and future, can conscientiously offer less than *all*, the little service they *can* render.

But some inquire, What can I do? My life seems so hemmed in, and my opportunities for testifying to the truth and suffering for the Master and his word in feeding his sheep, seem so small, that I fear I am not one of the sacrificers at all. Can that be so? Now brother, tell us of your case. Well, I am a miner; I work alone and have only Sundays and my evenings to myself, and my neighbors are ignorant [R943 : page 4] and seem irreligious. Very well, begin by using the advantages you have, and trust God to open larger and wider doors of usefulness before you by and by. First *think over* the good tidings of great joy yourself, and let it fill and overflow your own heart. Then think, how much good the joy and peace which you possess would do your fellows. Think, how much they need it, and how it might lighten and sweeten all the future of their lives. Think then of the privilege of being God's *messenger* to tell your neighbors of the great ransom price given for sin, and the full atonement which is made, and the grand results to follow, urging them to investigate and accept and be reconciled to God. Then pray God for wisdom to use the privilege he has granted you. By this time your heart will be full of love, fervor and zeal in your work as God's representative,

and fear and shame will be cast out of your heart. Gradually with study and care you will learn to be wise as a serpent, as well as harmless as a dove, in presenting the truth; and sooner or later you will find proof of your ministry (service) being acceptable, in the fruits it will bear. Some will be interested and hear you gladly, while more will revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for the truth's sake, because the world knoweth *you* not, even as it knew *Him* not (1 Jno. 3:1). Rejoice and be exceeding glad of this evidence of your faithfulness and at these promised present rewards, for great is your reward in heaven. Do not unwisely intrude your message at inopportune times, nor in a rough blunt manner, nor in harsh language, but let your speech be with wisdom seasoned with grace.

But a mother in moderate circumstances with a large family inquires, What can I do? I find no opportunity to sacrifice in the Lord's service. My time is wholly consumed in the care of my home and children – their morals as well as their persons. Ah! Sister, much depends upon *how* or to *whom* you sacrifice. Most of mothers know well what it is to sacrifice. To properly raise a family costs much self-sacrifice as every good mother knows. You sacrifice your health, your convenience, your time and comfort by night and by day. All good mothers find it thus, whether consecrated or not. But there is this difference: The majority do it simply from pride and selfish motives, in the desire to be honored in their children's honor and display. But the consecrated mother should regard the matter thus: I have given myself and my family for the present and the future to God; He has given me charge to use and dispose of these as so many talents according to my judgment for his glory; His word clearly teaches me that my children are my first charge; and it is God's will that I do my best to train them for usefulness to themselves and society. This part of your sacrifice rendered to God, *results* much the same as though you had not consecrated – in sacrifices for your children, yet in your case it is as actually a sacrifice of your talents to the Lord, as though done more directly to him. In fact, it is more acceptable to him, than if you were to

leave your little ones to grow up like weeds, while you go abroad to preach the Gospel.

But if the spirit of consecration is back of all you do for your children, and not selfish pride, it will have this effect: while anxious and careful for their *best* interests, you will remember that you have no more right to simply gratify pride in their dress, etc., than in your own, and they, though neat, will not be so extravagantly dressed as some of your neighbor's children whose care is backed by pride and vanity. You will seek to economize the Lord's money and time in dressing them as well as yourself, and you will not always naturally like to have them, just as your consecration will lead you to have them. But you will say to yourself, It is the Lord's time and money and must not be wasted; he wants me to care for my children, but not to make dolls of them and cultivate pride in them, to spoil their dispositions and unfit them for the present as well as future true pleasure and usefulness. Soon you will [R943 : page 5] find, that thus doing all things as unto the Lord, you will be able to save some time, etc., for use in more direct service of the truth; and you will find time and inclination to speak to a thoughtful neighbor or caller, or to write of the message to a friend, sending or giving a suitable paper with the seasonable word. Thus your life is as truly consecrated and acceptable with God through Christ, as that of one whose every day is spent in public preaching to multitudes. And just so it is, in whatever circumstances we may be placed – If we use the opportunities we possess, to the best advantage according to our best judgment, with an eye single to the Master's glory, it is as acceptable unto him, as the faithfulness and greater results of those possessing greater opportunities. And every faithful one will be able to increase his opportunities and service and shall thus increase his joy. – 1 Cor. 7:20-22.

Is not this a reasonable service? Surely it is; and furthermore, it is the most enjoyable use you can possibly make of your talents. Think you, that those who spend their lives in attempted self-gratification are truly happy? Nay, none ever succeeded in pleasing himself – in

gratifying all selfish desires. But he whose life is entirely given up to God and whose aim is to do God's will and honor him, is supremely happy. Even though it brings persecution and trouble he can rejoice, and be *exceeding* glad with a joy that the world can neither give, neither take away, and which even death cannot quench.

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in *deed* and in *truth*. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have we *confidence toward God*." – 1 John 3:18-21.

