

"YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST."

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." – Col. 3:23,24.

SERVANTS are specially addressed by the Apostle. He points out to them not only here but elsewhere that all service should be good service, and that whether the person served were one of the Lord's people or an enemy of the truth, the work should not be slighted. The principle of the thing is pointed out, namely, that we are servants of the Lord and therefore his representatives. So then, if we find that we are in the place in which Providence has placed us, we are to serve in that place or position faithfully, perseveringly, interestedly, as tho we were laboring for the Lord, and not for men: whereas if we considered ourselves as merely laboring for men, we might labor hard and faithfully for the good, and slightingly for the unkind and froward. But a point to be remembered is that we are all servants: none are called to be masters under the gospel call; one is our master, even Christ, and we all are brethren and fellow servants.

The effect of such advice is good: first, upon the world, and secondly, upon ourselves. Worldly people are keen to appreciate good service, altho they may not always acknowledge it or properly reward it: and the Apostle's instructions here, if diligently followed, would soon have the effect of making Christians the most desirable servants in any and every field of usefulness, because their work would be more faithfully and more carefully performed, and hence more satisfactory in its results. The effect of this would be that Christian intelligence and skill would be appreciated and sought; and under the operation of the general rule, being appreciated, they would be advanced to positions of more and more responsibility, where their carefulness might be the more valuable to their employers. Thus, the name of Christ would come to be respected amongst the most intelligent people, and the inquiry

would naturally be, What is there about these Christians, or about their teaching and doctrines, that makes them more capable and efficient as servants?

The answer would be, This is the spirit and result of their law of Love: they are not only forbidden to do injury to anyone, even their enemies, but they are enjoined to be faithful to everyone, and to do good even to their enemies. They are instructed to labor daily, not merely for the praise and approval of their earthly masters, but especially for the praise and approval of their heavenly Master. And then, if the inquiry came, Why should they do so? the answer would be, These Christians are not expecting earthly rewards but heavenly rewards: they are content to be "pilgrims and strangers" in this present time, and servants, if Providence so orders for them, and to learn lessons in patience, submission and love, anticipating that the time is coming when they shall be highly exalted, – when their present efforts to please their Master, by faithfulness in humble positions, shall be exchanged for a most glorious service, – when they shall be united with their Master in the great work of ruling and instructing the world of mankind, during the Millennial age.

And if the intelligent employer continued questioning, and asked, What has such a hope of the future to do with their faithfulness in the little affairs of the present life? his question would bring the answer, Their King, Master and Teacher has instructed them that all the little affairs of the present life have a bearing **[R2343 : page 228]** upon the development of character, and that they must develop characters of obedience, meekness, patience, love, else they will be unsuited to the future service in glory, to which they are called. Their Master has instructed them that in his view of matters he that is faithful in little things is the one who will be faithful in great things, and that only as they show their faithfulness and subordination to him, and their willingness to do his will in the present life, can they hope to be accounted worthy of the high position and great rewards which he has in reservation for those that love him. The employer would be informed

further that all the tests and trials of patience and faith, in obedience to the Word of the Lord, are understood by Christians to be tests of their love for and loyalty to their Master and King, because he has so instructed. Who can doubt that the influence of such living epistles would be great for good in the world?

And what is true as respects those who are engaged in serving masters literally is true also of the entire household of faith, whatever may be their stations in life, – master or servant, mistress or maid, manager or subordinate; because all of the Lord's people are his servants. True, we are termed his brethren also, but there is nothing inconsistent with the thought of our being his brethren and still being his servants; nor would there be anything inconsistent with the thought that while all of the Lord's people are brethren some of them might, in a particular sense, be servants of brethren; and both of these thoughts are prominently set before us in the Scriptures. Each one is to share in the others' love. "Love as brethren;" and each one is to share in serving, and to esteem it a special privilege to "serve one another."

Nothing could be much more contrary to the spirit of the world, than this. The spirit of the world is to make other people your servants, and as for you, avoid serving anybody as much as possible. The spirit of Christ, on the contrary, is a *spirit of service*, and not a spirit of mastery, browbeating, domineering, force, compulsion: it leads those who possess it to seek opportunities for service – to "do good unto all men as we have opportunity, *especially* to the household of faith;" and to the contrary it leads those under its influence to be very generous and to ask or require only reasonable service from others.

The foundation principles of the Christian religion are laid upon these lines, which are the reverse of the world's lines of thought and conduct; namely, that the greatest one in the Church is the one who is the greatest servant, the one who renders most assistance to others. The greatest servant in the Church was the great Head of the Church himself, who gave even his life on our behalf. And those of his

followers who desire to be great in the estimation of the Lord and so esteemed of their fellows, are enjoined that they should follow closely in the Master's footsteps, and with humility of heart be ready and seek to lay down their lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16.) Nor does this mean simply formal service; it means an actual service. Our Lord's sacrifice, we see, was not merely a form or a show of interest and of love: it was the giving of his life as the purchase price for ours. So with us; we are not merely to love one another and to serve one another, in word, in profession, in title (as for instance, the word "minister" signifies servant); but we are to serve one another as we are to love one another, "in deed and in truth." – 1 John 3:18.

Looking about us for opportunity of service we find our Lord's instruction through the Apostle, that we should seek to do good to all men according to our ability and opportunity, but especially to the household of faith. As we look first to the household of faith to see what service we can render, we find in this household some who are naturally more attractive to us than others, some whom we would find it a pleasure to serve; while others, because of more perverse natural conditions, we find less congenial, even repellant; and these we feel less disposed to serve. But this is because of a wrong view of the subject. We are to remember that all consecrated believers are new creatures in Christ Jesus and accepted of the Lord as members of his body, fellow-members with ourselves. From this standpoint only can we realize to the full the significance of the Apostle's words in our text, "Ye do serve the Lord Christ." The Master informs us that the slightest service done to the least of his brethren is accepted as done to himself. With this view of matters clearly in mind, we see our duty of service in a new light. We see that the brother or sister of high spiritual development and possessing more of the Lord's likeness and grace, whose company we find so congenial, and whom we would delight to serve, often needs our service far less than others who are of the same Body, acknowledged by the same Head, who have much more natural depravity, unconquered, to contend with. These need our special sympathy and love and care and helpfulness; for the proper conception

of service is a desire to render some benefit: and there is the more opportunity to benefit or help those who most need assistance.

Of our Lord it is written that he "pleased not himself," in his serving. He did not come into the world on a mission of self-gratification and pleasure; but to render service. He himself said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." We are to have his spirit, [R2343 : page 229] and the thought with us is not to be our own pleasure or convenience, but on the contrary the necessities of those whom the Lord would have us serve, – namely, those of his household most in need of our aid. We may have less pleasure, according to the flesh, in serving such than we would have in serving others, but it is not fleshly pleasure that we are seeking; and we can [R2344 : page 229] have as much or more spiritual pleasure serving those who are the most needy members of the body of Christ, because we realize that this is the will of our Master. It is to him that we really render the service, and our highest spiritual pleasure must be in doing those things which are pleasing in his sight. And it is because our Master has so ordered, that the household of faith is to be served in preference to any other class; consequently we are to ignore the opinions of the worldly and of the nominal church and not to seek out the most degraded people of the world, and spend our energies upon them, but we are to seek the most needy members of the body of Christ, that we may be most helpful to them. The Lord will attend to the poor heathen world in due time, and the time is now nigh at hand. The first work is, as we have seen from the Scriptures, the preparation of the body of Christ; and it is to this end that we are to "edify *one another*, building up *one another* in the most holy faith."

Another thought respecting service is that the true service of the Lord and his truth may be a small, humble and comparatively insignificant service, or a larger and more prominent service. And of course, if two opportunities for service offer, which were otherwise alike, we should choose and use the larger and the more important of the two opportunities. But we are to guard ourselves against seeking

for large opportunities for service, and overlooking or intentionally passing by smaller opportunities. We believe this is a common error amongst those who seek to serve the Lord Christ. They desire to do some great thing for him; they would be overjoyed with the privilege of addressing thousands of intelligent and interested hearers. They fain would sway nations to the Lord's standard. Some would be willing to use smaller opportunities, and to address a hundred or fifty or even less, yet perhaps would think it not worth while to use the little opportunities of everyday life in speaking to one or two or three, or a dozen or a score, in a day, or of handing a tract, or of loaning a book, or of circulating tracts in the railway train, or upon the street corner. These services they would esteem too insignificant to render to the Master; they feel that they must do some great thing.

This is a serious mistake, and any who find such a disposition in their hearts should at once analyze their sentiments carefully, to ascertain whether or not they have the desire to serve the Lord, or whether theirs is a desire for self-glorification, – a desire to be identified with something great, prominent and distinguished. The Lord's rule is, not to put a new servant into a very important place. The captains in the Lord's army are expected to rise from the ranks. He tells us the process of his judgment respecting fitness for prominent service, when he says, "He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is greater." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted; he that exalteth himself shall be abased." And the more we look at the principles here set forth, the more we see of their wisdom and correctness. The person who is earnest and zealous to serve the Lord, so willing and so anxious for the opportunity that he will do what his hand finds to do with his might, that is a true servant; that servant shows his love for the Master, – shows that his is not a love of self and of self-advancement. Such servants, the Lord sees, can be trusted with a more important service, and consequently, when a more important service is to be attended to, usually the Lord selects one who has been faithful in a few things, to give charge over larger things. And who would dispute the wisdom of the Lord's method? He who has not

humility enough to do the smallest service for the Lord, for the truth, and for the fellow-members of the body of Christ, has not humility enough to be entrusted with any larger service; for larger service might prove a great injury to himself, since it would tend to cultivate a quality which is latent in every member of the fallen race, and one which would thoroughly incapacitate him for further service, namely, pride, – self-conceit and its concomitant evils.

In thus requiring that all who would be followers of him shall be servants, not merely in name, but in deed and in truth and in spirit, our Lord lays down a rule which tends to keep out of his real flock the selfish and ambitious wolves. Yet the danger remains that, if the Lord's flock as a whole in any place loses the real conception of their call, that it is a call to service, the self-seeking disposition is apt to spread as a contagion from one to another of the entire company, until, instead of being servants one of the other, they may become a group of self-seekers; each seeking his own welfare and honor and position, and each neglecting the fact that the chief business of life is to render service to others. And each one who gets into this attitude of self-seeking himself is thereby to a large degree blinded to the proper principles that should govern. And a group of Christians in such a condition might, and very probably would, select as their principal one or leader a person of self-seeking disposition, a lord over God's heritage, instead of a servant of the flock. **[R2344 : page 230]**

Seeing that this is the Lord's arrangement, that we are to grow in this grace by noticing and using our opportunities as servants, we exhort all who may read these lines to be more faithful, henceforth, in seeking for opportunities of service to the Church which is the body of Christ; and that thus carefully seeking they take heed that they do not pass by some of the small opportunities. Let us remember that our great Master set us an example in this direction, preaching some of his most wonderful sermons to extremely small audiences. For instance; his discourse on the Water of Life, to the woman of Samaria; his discourse on Heavenly versus Earthly things, to Nicodemus; his discourse to

Nathaniel, and his discourse to the two who were going to Emmaus, after his resurrection. If we take care of the little opportunities for service, in a humble way, and are faithful in these, and render this service heartily as unto the Lord, we will by and by be granted larger and still larger opportunities. To him that hath used his opportunities shall be granted more, and from him who hath not used his opportunities, that which he has had will be taken from him. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the *reward*. For ye serve the Lord Christ."

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SOME BETTER THING.

Tho wintry wind the yellow leaf displaceth,
For spring's sweet harbingers it maketh room; –
Ere long the tender bud the forest graceth,
New verdure waketh from old Nature's tomb.

The snowy blossom from the orchard fadeth,
'Tis then the earnest of fair fruit we find;
Tho morning mist the landscape overshadoweth,
The sunlit mountain-peaks are just behind.

Lo, in the crimson West the glory dieth,
And from his throne Day's monarch hath withdrawn!
Herein the promise of the sunrise lieth –
Already we are waiting for the dawn.

O heart bereaved, some better thing remaineth,
Tho God should seem thy treasures to remove;
Some better thing his gracious hand retaineth,
He will not fail the children of his love.

Some better thing! Thy life-joy all departed –
Its glory trailing sadly in the dust;
O cleave to him, – the Savior tender-hearted;

Thou canst not understand, but thou canst trust.

Perchance he leads to depths of self-abasement,
And storms awake, and billows round thee roll;
Give thanks! Contrition is the open casement
Through which the Dove of Peace shall reach thy soul.

O patient heart, thy best, thy brightest bringing,
With full consent upon his altar lay!
Some fair new blessing even now is winging,
All unobserved, its sure but noiseless way.

Thy purpose crossed, each sunny prospect clouded,
Still to his changeless promise learn to cling;
Altho his ways may be in darkness shrouded,
Jehovah hath reserved some better thing.

– LUCY A. BENNETT.
