

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE THE SPIRIT OF DISCIPLESHIP

"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." – Matt. 20:27.

PROPER aspirations are very beneficial, both to the person himself and to those with whom he comes in contact. Our Lord had an aspiration. We read of Him that He "for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2.) There are worthy incentives; otherwise the Father would not have set one before His Son. The thought which should inspire us is that if we are faithful in the things of this present time, the Lord will make us ruler over many things. So the ardent desire to obtain these things which God has reserved for those who love Him, is laudable; for these blessings are of God.

Every New Creature has high aspirations. In fact, every one should have an ideal toward which he is striving; and having this wish to attain it indicates that there is a *motive* behind the desire. It is altogether proper to have incentives before the mind, and it is proper to know what kind are worthy of our efforts; otherwise wrong ones might lead us astray. In our text a most laudable aspiration is placed before us.

The Church, which is the representative of Christ, is the Body of our Lord in the flesh. And the Apostle Paul, speaking of ambitions, advised the Church that they should have the more profitable aspirations, that they might be teachers, instructors of the flock; for this is the most useful office in the Church. It is known that one gift of St. Paul's time was speaking in an unknown tongue. It was a very remarkable gift. But the Apostle pointed out that to speak in an unknown tongue was not so much to be sought after as some gift that would be useful in the Church.

We do not have these miraculous gifts in the present time, but we have the Word of God, and the desire to be able to make known the Truth of the Lord. Therefore the gift of oratory is still a desirable one. The Apostle proceeded to point out that we should desire to have the fruits of the Spirit – that they may have a controlling influence upon us.

RESPONSIBILITY UPON EACH ECCLESIA

As respects positions in the Church, the Lord indicated that *He* would do the setting. "Now God hath set the various members in the Body as it hath pleased Him." God ordained that there should be in the Body this setting; for instance, the service of the eye. As the eye member assists the human body, so the eye member in the Church may be very assistful to the Body of Christ. Also there are ear members, foot members, hand members and tongue members. These different members have unlike services to perform for the welfare of the whole body. The hand [R5322 : page 295] is not to say to the foot, "I have no need of thee," or vice versa. – I Corinthians 12:14-31.

If the body tries to walk on the *hands*, it is not the Divine order. The body should walk on the *feet*. So it is in a congregation. But if the congregation lays too much on the feet members, it is depriving the hand members of their use. The various members should be in the positions where they can render the most efficient service. In other words, the congregation should seek to know the service God has evidently prepared each individual to perform. They are to seek to use their best judgment, to place the right person in the right position.

We see congregations occasionally where they try to make *all* walk on the hands and not on the feet. That congregation loses in not putting every member into the place for which Divine Providence has especially qualified him. To do so is the responsibility of the congregation. However, if it tries to make the

Body walk on the hands instead of the feet, it will learn in time, probably, to get the hands to exercise themselves in their own position, and likewise the feet in theirs; and each member will finally do the service for which he is fitted.

HUMILITY INDISPENSABLE TO GOD'S SERVICE

Not only is it to the disadvantage of the congregation for the members to be in the wrong positions, but it is also wrong for the members to try to do other services than those which they *should be* doing. It is not in our power to change ourselves from what we are by nature. Only Divine Power could prepare us for service in another part of the Body. Our proper attitude should be to really *serve* the Body of Christ, to *serve* the Lord. We should notice wherever there is a service to be rendered which we *can* do. "Do with thy might what thy hands find to do."

The difficulty with many in the Church is that they desire to do what somebody else is doing – something that they admire. They are not looking around to see what they *can always* do – do good unto all men, as they have opportunity, but especially unto those who are of the household of faith. They have not the proper spirit of discipleship. Therefore the injunction of our text should lead them to say to themselves, My highest ambition should be to *serve* the Lord *acceptably*, and let Him take care of the *place* where I may serve. Here is a little place; there is a little corner. I will try to do the thing which is needful in my position. If the Lord shall open the way, and show me something else which seems to be more important, I will take that. But I will do with my might what it is my duty to do – whether it is sweeping, or engaging a hall for a meeting. Whatever comes as an opportunity to me, that I will do.

This does not mean that we have no aspirations. The controlling impulse is to serve the Church. Here we have a laudable motive, a proper desire. But it seems that some are *ambitious* – seek to

be *chief*. Our own ambition (and we believe it would also be the Spirit of the Lord) is not to *help* one who aspires to the chief place, into the position which he seeks. To assist him in such a course would do injury both to him and the cause. But if we find any one seeking to do with his might what his hands find to do, we may be sure that this will be approved [R5322 : page 296] of the Lord; and perhaps the Lord will later give him some more important work in recognition of his faithful service to Him.

SELF-SEEKING TO BE DEPRECATED

Each is to be content with what the Lord's Providence opens up to him. He is not to be self-seeking. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:14.) He that exalteth *himself* is not to be exalted by the *Church*; for he will not be exalted by the Lord. He that humbleth himself will be exalted, either by the vote of the congregation, or by the Lord's will.

As the matter is stated in our text, we think the Lord meant this: There will be some of you who necessarily will be recognized as chief. There are various kinds of service, and it is necessary to have a chief in connection with the services of each congregation. God has recognized this Himself. He made Jesus a Chief. He passed by Satan, who was self-seeking. He chose Jesus, and made the road very narrow to Him! But after Jesus had proved His humility, then the Father gave Him the high exaltation, gave Him the great reward promised.

The Father is seeking now those who will have the same spirit of *humility*, the same spirit of *service*, that the Lord Jesus manifested. We look at Him, and we see that, while the Father held out the condition of being *chief*, He also held out the condition of being *servant*. Jesus, we see, was the Servant of all. Therefore God exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name.

So it should be with each little congregation of the Church. It is the Lord's will that not every one who would be its chief servant should be recognized as the chief. But the Lord will recognize the one who will show himself humble-minded, as He has shown Himself to be, in doing *anything* for the brethren. Let such be your servant. Each should consider that the chief honor amongst you, amongst the Lord's brethren, is to be servant. And the one who is most faithful should be given the opportunity to serve. In that sense he would be your chief.

