

## THE GREAT PRIVILEGE OF TRUE SERVICE

**"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a Ransom for many." – Matthew 20:28.**

THE word minister has the same import as the word serve. The Master tells us that the purpose of His coming into the world was not a selfish one. He had been quite content with the glory and honor which He had with the Father before the world was. (John 17:5.) While it is true that the Savior is now exalted to a position very much higher than His previous one, yet He assures us that it was not with the spirit, the desire, for exaltation that He came into the world. On the contrary, He wished to serve. He said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God! Thy Law is written in My heart." – Psalm 40:8.

In obedience to this Divine will, our Lord left the glory which He had with the Father, came down to earth and gave Himself up to death, even the death of the cross. On the night of His betrayal and arrest He said, "The cup which My Father hath poured for Me, shall I not drink it?" He was obedient even unto the end.

Before coming into the world, our Lord had perceived that mankind was in need of a Savior, and no doubt this had to do with His gladly accepting the Divine arrangement. He saw something of the Father's purpose in regard to fallen humanity. And when, during His earthly life, He saw these poor creatures in sin, degradation and weakness, He did not try to make them slaves. He did not try to use His power, His intelligence, selfishly for His own comfort; but He laid down His life unselfishly. He set Himself to work out the Plan which the Father had arranged.

Our Lord came not to be ministered unto. He did not come into the world to have servants and to get all that He could in return for the expenditure of a small amount of His own energy. He came not

from any selfish motive whatever, but to serve others – to do good. As He Himself testified, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man *lay down his life* for his friends." This He did in harmony with the Father's Plan.

We do not understand, however, that our Lord refused to have any one serve Him. He accepted service from others. The thought of our text is that He came to render a service; not that He might be served; and in order that He might carry out His purpose it was necessary for Him to become a servant. Had there been no need for that service, we cannot think that the Lord would have humbled Himself and taken the bondman's form, or have undergone the severe trials of His earthly existence. But He came to render a service that was necessary to the well-being, happiness, yea, the very life of the entire human family.

Through Adam's disobedience sin had entered into the world. God's Law pronounced the penalty of death for that sin. Thus the whole race of mankind was perishing; and if they were ever to be rescued, so that they would not perish like brute beasts, they must be redeemed. According to the Divine Law, there must be a Ransom-price for the first perfect man, who had sinned. The Only Begotten was willing to meet this necessity. He rejoiced to do this work, to be the servant, the minister of God for this purpose, because of the need of the service, because it would bring blessing to others.

This is the spirit that should actuate every one of us. We should desire to incorporate into our character this principle of service. We should not serve merely because we like to work, like to be busy, but because we perceive there is a work necessary, and we are glad to lay down our lives in this blessed service.

## **THE ATTITUDE OF TRUE CONSECRATION**

There are some who think it necessary to wash the feet of others. But since there is no real good to be accomplished by such a

ceremony – nothing desirable – there is no reason why it should be performed. We cannot think that Jesus would have washed His disciples' feet unless they had needed washing. But if at any time we can thus render a *real service*, any of us should be glad of the opportunity to serve a fellow-member of the Body of Christ – by washing his feet, or in any manner. The thought is to appreciate the privilege of real service, rather than the opportunity of doing something merely because it is *menial*. Jesus did what He did because it was helpful service, and was the Father's will. He wished also to teach His disciples that they should not be above doing the humblest service for each other as brethren. In addition, Jesus' words on this occasion seemed to emphasize the thought of the need of daily cleansing of the Lord's disciples from earth-defilement. See John 13:6-10.

The laying down of our Lord's life was accomplished moment by moment, day by day, in teaching, in healing the sick, the deaf, the blind, and in instructing His disciples. In nothing did He seek to serve Himself. Therefore the record is, "He went about doing good." We should make application of this principle to ourselves; for "as He was, so are we, in this world." The attitude of true consecration is that we walk in Jesus' steps, and that we seek to know the Father's will in order to do it. This implies that we be Bible students, like the Bereans of old, who "searched the Scriptures daily."

If we have the Master's spirit, we shall be desirous of "doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially unto them who are of the Household of Faith." (Galatians 6:10.) And this is the advice of St. Paul, who urged that we be followers of himself, even as he followed Christ. The lives of Jesus and the Apostles stand out very distinctly on the pages of history as notable for their unselfish service of others.

Many have lorded it over God's heritage. The context shows that our Lord had this class in mind. He declares that the rulers of the

Gentiles exercised authority over their people; and that this was at the expense of the ruled, and was very rarely accompanied by a desire to serve the people.

## **SELFISHNESS UNFITS FOR THE KINGDOM**

We see how our Master came to use the words of our text. The disciples were afflicted with a common ailment – love of honor of men and also love of honor of the Lord. Two of them had made an earnest request to have a place of special honor in His Kingdom. Their request aroused a spirit of indignation among the other ten, and a controversy resulted. They had the thought fixed in their minds that Jesus had promised them a share in the Kingdom. (Matthew 19:27-29.) If it had been wrong for them to have this promise in mind, it would have been wrong for the Lord to give them the promise. But they failed to see that the Father would give that place to none who would not manifest fullest loyalty to Him and to His Word.

The disciples had at that time a certain amount of false dignity, or pride, that would have made them unfit for a place in the Throne. Hence the Lord reminded them that the conditions upon which a seat in the Throne would be given to any one were that such a one should **[R5376 : page 7]** manifest so great loyalty to the principles of God's Government, and so great humility of spirit, that he would be glad to render service to any one in need. And He set Himself forth as an Example.

We paraphrase our Lord's words: Do you think that I left Heaven and came down to earth that people might serve Me? No. The conditions to which I have come are very inferior to those which I left. But the Father gave Me the privilege of service in this matter, and I am glad to have this service, because it is the Divine will. I have come to minister, to serve, to give My life as a Ransom-price for all.

This thought, then, He set before them – that they should rejoice in the privilege of service – rejoice in having the privilege of doing

something really helpful to others, especially the brethren in the Body of Christ. As we apply this principle broadly, we see how it is exemplified in the world, in the affairs of every day life. The whole human family are servants. One man serves as a jeweler; another as a manufacturer of woolen goods. He serves by buying wool, converting it into cloth and into garments. Another serves as a grocer and supplies food. Some are chiropodists; some, barbers; some, tailors; some, physicians; etc. In every case it is a service to others.

Bringing the matter still lower, we see that the principle extends even to service of the dumb brutes. A horse cannot curry himself; and even a hog needs to be served – needs a trough, a bed, and food. We in turn are served by the brute creation. Whoever separates himself from this arrangement of service is getting away from his own good, and violating a Law of the Universe. Whoever gets to the place where he does no service, but has others to serve him, is to be pitied. He will be unhappy, be he ever so wealthy. Whoever would take this attitude would be arrogant and selfish, and his life would be devoid of beauty or of worth.

### **SERVICE A DELIGHT TO THE CHRISTIAN**

The true Christian enters into the spirit of service, as did his Master, and delights to do a good turn to any one as he has opportunity. If there are those who are helpless, who are sick, these are calls upon his services as he has ability and is able to lend a helping hand. We are to serve all men "as we have opportunity, especially those who are of the Household of Faith."

Where shall we draw the line? The answer is that we must use moderation. We find ourselves every day passing by services that others have needed, but that we have not been able to perform. How then shall we regulate the matter, since we cannot do all that we would? Our own family should be our first charge, or responsibility. He who neglects his own is worse than an unbeliever. Charity begins at home. If we have responsibilities there, we could not give so much

comfort, so much time, so much money, to others as we would to those of our own family.

### **LAZINESS NOT TO BE ENCOURAGED**

Those who have money have a talent that they can use in doing good. They will not find very much opportunity so far as the world is concerned. Even if we had millions of dollars, the spirit of a sound mind should govern us in its expenditure. To give money to encourage anybody in wastefulness, slothfulness and idleness would be to misuse it, and not to do good. God Himself declared, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." The happiest people are those who are employed; the most unhappy are those who have nothing to do, those who have no ambition.

We cannot do even for our own families all that we would wish to do; for in the case of our own there is often a lack of appreciation. Some of our relatives would never have enough. We could never do sufficient for them. We should exercise the spirit of a sound mind, then, in deciding what to do. Let us ever remember that when we have entered the service of the Lord we are given a new commission, a special work to do in the world.

What kind of service are we then given? It is the service of ambassador of the Lord. We are to preach the Truth wherever there is an ear to hear and an eye to discern. Those who have not the hearing ear and the seeing eye might rend us, as the Master foretold. (Matthew 7:6.) We are therefore to use the spirit of a sound mind in discriminating between those who are good subjects for the Truth, and those who are not.

We say to the Master, Lord, we will give all of our time to Thee and to Thy Truth. Then He replies, But you are not to go ragged or naked, in order that you may preach the Gospel. It is proper that you provide the things needful. But do not think to get a certain amount

of money laid up for yourself first, and then afterwards go and proclaim the Kingdom.

We may ask, Does this excuse us, Lord, from doing anything for our fellowmen and for our own families? He answers that we should not neglect our own families, but should care for them according to their necessities. We are, however, to guide our affairs with economy. If our family fail to do their part, and will not put forth any effort when of sufficient age and able to earn a livelihood for themselves, then we are to do nothing for them; for having their own strength, they do not need our assistance. We are to do for them only the things that are needful. We believe this is the mind of the Lord.

### **OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS STEWARDS**

While we are to do good to all men, yet our special service is to be rendered in the Lord's work, the work of the Father – in dispensing the Truth. But while we are so doing, we may be able to speak a kind word to those with whom we come in contact. If we have money we may help in that way. But we should remember that we do not own even a penny of what we possess, or a moment of our time. All belongs to the Lord and should be spent along the lines of spiritual things, except where there is real necessity along earthly lines. To be sure, the world will not esteem us so much as if we would do more along earthly lines; but we have not received our commission from the world.

We perceive that the spirit of the Lord Jesus has had great influence in the world. It has made a deep impression upon noble souls, and has led them to the establishment of Orphans' Homes, Hospitals for the blind, Homes for the incurable, etc.; and these institutions are provided for by the public. It is recognized today to be proper to provide for those unable to provide for themselves. Since the world has settled this matter from a business point of view, the Lord's people are excused from personal responsibility which they have as God's ambassadors. It is the proper thing to care for the

sick and the maimed; but because the city and state have provided, individual responsibility is largely lifted.

There are wealthy people who say, I prefer to look after my sick friends myself, and send them to a high-priced institution. If any do so, this is their own business. They may also say, I prefer to live in a million dollar house. This, too, is their own business. They have a right to do so; and they may also have their automobiles and private yachts for pleasure, etc. But with the Christian it is different. All he possesses belongs to **[R5376 : page 8]** the Lord. He therefore is in a different position from any others. He is not to be like the world. All that he does is for God – because of his relationship to Him as a son. "*Now* are *we* the *sons* of God."

### **THE HUMBLE TO BE EXALTED**

In the words of our text, the Master was instructing His disciples that they should not desire to rule – that He desired as His followers those who had most of His spirit of humility and service. If any man were to exalt himself, they were to have correspondingly a lower esteem for him; for "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Lord will send the experiences which will exalt or abase, and it is for us to show our appreciation where we see the right principles in operation. Whoever manifests most of the Spirit of Christ is to be highest in our esteem. Whoever has less of the Spirit of Christ is to be lower in our esteem. These characteristics are to be quietly observed by us.

The basis upon which the world operates is selfishness. This is the secret of war, rebellion, revolution, etc. – one party and another seeking selfishly to control riches, honor, power or authority. We are delighted, as Christians, to note the difference in the spirit which we are of. We are to remember that we are by nature "children of wrath even as others." We are not to suppose that we shall be changed instantly; but the mind will be changed, we shall grow more Christlike. And as New Creatures in Christ we are to keep a diligent



watch lest the service we are so desirous of rendering to the Lord become vitiated more or less, after the fashion of the spirit of the world.

## **THE MILLENNIAL REIGN A SERVICE**

Our Lord, when He takes His great power to reign, will not have the same motive as have the rulers of the present time – merely to assume power for His own glory and for vaunting Himself. He will, indeed, have great power and authority, but it will be in harmony with what the Heavenly Father has arranged. It will be a **[R5377 : page 8]** manifestation of glory and power, not to crush the world, but to bless and uplift it. This work will be accomplished from the standpoint of service, with a view to helping mankind to be the real rulers of the world; for the Messianic Kingdom will cease when the world shall be able to take care of itself.

We perceive that this is the way it was purposed from the first. The Heavenly Father made man the king of earth. God crowned man with glory and honor, and set him over the works of His hands. (Psalm 8:5,6; Hebrews 2:7.) It is not His purpose to keep mankind under the iron rod forever. The rod will be merely for temporary service, for man's true development, that the race may be brought back to the full blessing of their original privilege as kings of earth.

The Lord's Kingdom, we see, will be very different from any other ever instituted. Our service, as members of Christ's Body, will be the same as His. We shall share with Him in the uplifting of humanity. "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." – Ephesians 2:6,7.

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