

HOW AND WHERE SHALL I SERVE?

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." – 1 Corinthians 7:24.

IN THE CONTEXT, the Apostle has been discussing marriage and its responsibilities. He has also been discussing slaves and their state. He asks, "Art thou called being a slave? Then seek not to be free." Nevertheless, he added that if freedom were to come to the slave, he should be glad to avail himself of the opportunity of having a wider field of service as a free man. But the slave should not say to His master: I have become a child of God, and therefore your regulations are nothing to me; you cannot longer hold me as a slave.

The Apostle gives the thought that the Lord's people are not to want an immediate change from the condition in which they were called. His thought is, You are not necessarily to think that you are to leave what you are now doing. Your business may be that of a servant, or a slave; therein abide – in the sense of having your mind at rest. If the Lord opens the door, then you are to look about. If your condition is one of great severity, it is right to ask the Lord that in His own due time He will make it less so, if it please Him. He has promised us that with every temptation He will provide a way of escape or direct the issue, that we may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13.) This would apply to our business relationships – to everything.

If one were single, he should consider very carefully the matter of taking on added responsibilities. He should think: "I was called when single. Does the Lord wish me to marry?" And if he comes to the conclusion that the Lord so desires, he should remember the Apostle's injunction, "Only in the Lord." If he were married when called, he should not say, "I wish I were not married. I could do so

much more, so much better, if not married." He was married when called, and therefore [R5498 : page 213] there is a mortgage upon his time. He has this mortgage or contract to consider.

ENTER OPEN DOORS, BUT DO NOT FORCE THEM

Nevertheless, the Apostle, in previous verses of this same chapter points out that if the unbelieving husband or wife should depart, let them do so. Do not seek to oppose their going if they desire to go. The Lord is able to provide for your affairs. And if that is the Lord's providence for you, so accept it. As for the thought of our leaving our business to go into the Colporteur work, or the Pilgrim work, or the Class Extension work, or whatever it might be, the proper thing for us to consider would be, Is this an opening of the Lord? If we find that a better opportunity for service comes to us in this way, a wider opportunity for work in the Harvest Field, and that there is an *open door*, then we should rejoice and should enter the door.

But if we find that there is no open door and we would have to *force one open*, to violate some right principle to enter such work, that would alter the case. We must stand for principle. We shall never have to oppose any right principle to engage in the Lord's service; there is always some way to serve. The Apostle is here addressing brethren, and his words could not refer to any who were then engaged in a dishonorable avocation.

NO BROTHER IN DISREPUTABLE BUSINESS

But suppose that a man, before receiving the Truth, had been the keeper of a gambling house, or were in some other disreputable business. Suppose he had been a saloon-keeper (several brethren have come from this business). After he had accepted the Truth, he would say, Here! What am I doing? Am I dispensing to human beings that which is to their injury? I must quit this. And so he would have to get out of the saloon business before he could

become a child of God at all; he would have to get out of the unprincipled *condition of mind* before he could become a child of God. The Apostle's words were addressed to the brethren: "Brethren, let every man so abide." He would not be a brother in Christ while in a business repugnant to his conscience and injurious to his fellow-creatures.

The whole matter was, of course, forceful to servants in the Apostle's day. In that time and in every time the humble classes, the servant classes, the slave classes, seem to have been ready to receive the Message. Our Lord said unto the rich, as a class, "Woe unto you rich!" And to the poor He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden." And we see that not many wise, not many rich, not many noble, come into the Light.

BRETHREN IN PENAL INSTITUTIONS

A prisoner in a penal institution would do well to say to himself, "Well, in God's providence this Message has reached me here in prison. Perhaps I should never have had it if I had not been here." If we were such a person, instead of hastening to try to pry open the doors by sending a paper to petition release, we would consider well before we started such a paper. We would think, "Perhaps I may have opportunities for serving the Lord amongst these fellow-prisoners. Perhaps I may have an opportunity of preaching to them." Or if there were an application made for release, and if the application resulted in refusal, we should bow to that refusal as being the Lord's word in the matter. We would try to be thoroughly content and thoroughly happy, and would say, "I will strive to show forth the praises of God, who has called me out of darkness into His marvelous light." We could not know but that a man would have just as good opportunity for service there as anywhere else. The Lord will give what is best to all His faithful ones.

