

## **SERVANTHOOD: LIFE'S GREATEST HONOR**

*What is the greatest honor in life? What is the highest goal that one can achieve? Is it to acquire valuable material things? To amass great wealth? To attain fame and prestige, distinction and power? All of these may be desirable, but according to the Bible the greatest honor given to man is to be a servant of Jesus Christ!*

To some, the word “servant” conjures up thoughts of subjection and drudgery. On the other hand, “serving” might suggest a gracious hostess who cares for the needs of her guests, or elected public officials who look after their constituents, or military personnel enlisted by their country. *Servitude* may be defined as forced labor. *Service* is fulfillment of one's duties or obligations. But *servanthood* is a heart quality marked by devotion and commitment. The child of God who has humbly submitted to his Master will express this characteristic in his attitudes and actions.

### **ALIVE SPIRITUALLY**

The true servant of God must first of all be born again. Without the new birth he is dead in his transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1-3). He is incapable of performing any service for the Lord until he is made alive spiritually. A person may do outstanding deeds in the community and be a good husband and provider for his family, yet service for God is impossible because he has not acknowledged Christ as Savior and Lord. When God raises one from spiritual death by grace through faith, that person becomes a new creation in Christ. Only then is he ready to become a servant who can do the good works God has prepared for him to do (vv. 8-10).

### **AVAILABLE FOR SERVICE**

When the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord high and exalted (6:1), he acknowledged Him as absolute sovereign and recognized himself as totally unworthy (v.5). Then he was cleansed, and he heard the voice of the Lord, “Who will go?” (vv. 6-8). Confronted with the need and the call, he answered, “Here am I send me” (v.8). Isaiah made himself available. A person may have heard God's call and may have been impressed by the need, but until he presents himself to God and is ready to become involved in meeting the need, he does not become a servant (Romans 12:1):

### **ATTUNED TO GOD'S AUTHORITY**

One who understands the meaning of servanthood allows the Lord to control his life. He seeks to align himself with God's will and purpose as revealed in His Word. Jesus said, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46 NIV). Just after Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper, He began to wash His disciples' feet (John 13). When He came to Peter, the impetuous disciple at first refused. Jesus said He was setting an example and that no servant is greater than his lord. In Acts 10, Peter responded to the Lord's command, saying, “No, Lord.” But that is a contradiction of terms. To call Him “Lord” is to be obedient to Him. To say no to the Lord is to deny His authority.

## **ABLE TO DO THE WORK**

The servant is called to do work for which he is fitted. The Lord uses a person's natural aptitudes and abilities. He doesn't require him to serve where he is not qualified. Although that place may be obscure, no servant is obscure to God. Consider the servants in John 2:9. They were in the kitchen when they saw the Lord change the water into wine for the wedding. But that doesn't mean there is a premium on lowliness. Joseph and Daniel were both in high positions, yet were faithful servants of God. Whatever God assigns us to do, He enables us to do. The true servant will say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

## **ACCOUNTABLE TO THE MASTER**

The responsible servant has a sense of accountability. He takes each assignment seriously, does it well, makes good use of time, and finishes the job. He knows he will have to give an account (Romans 14:12). To expect the Lord's approval, one must do his work to the best of his ability. He will give a full day's work for a full day's pay. Dependability is one of the finest characteristics in a servant. Christ Himself came to do God's will. He completed the work, even to death on the cross. Because of this, God has highly exalted Him (Philippians 2:6-11). How wonderful if Christ can say to us in that day, "You have done what I asked you to do! Mission accomplished!"

## **AMIABLE OF DISPOSITION**

Although a person may be alive spiritually, available to serve, aligned with the purpose of God, adept at his work, and have a sense of accountability, what a disgrace he is to God if he "sows discord among the brethren," is abrasive, and uncooperative!

When Hudson Taylor was desperately in need of help, he asked his mission board not to send anyone, even though otherwise qualified, unless he had an amiable disposition. Christ Himself was "meek and lowly of heart." And if we are to be involved in service for Him, we must show Christlike love and consideration for others. These characteristics are like oil in the machinery. The Lord's servants should respect their associates and serve together as a team. An answer to one who might question the position or prominence of another is Christ's word, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me" (John 21:22). A pleasant disposition is a work of grace essential in God's servants. The attitude of humility, Christ said in Matthew 18:4, is the characteristic that determines who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

As we evaluate our personal *attitudes* and *activity* in the Lord's work, our highest goal should be to know Him and to do His will, so that He may say to us, "Well done, thou *good* and *faithful* servant" (Matthew 25:21).

*by Clair Hess*