

From the Online Library on
Austin-Sparks.Net



**"The
Servant
of the
Lord"**

T. Austin-Sparks



Published as an E-book

by

Austin-Sparks.Net

Email: info@austin-sparks.net

ISBN: 978-1-927219-75-1

In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given and not sold for profit, and that his messages be reproduced word for word, we ask if you choose to share these messages with others, to please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of any changes, free of any charge (except necessary distribution costs) and with this statement included.

"The Servant of the Lord"

by T. Austin-Sparks

Simple messages on some New Testament Conceptions of Christian Work and Workers.

First published in "A Witness and A Testimony" magazines, 1928-1930.

Contents

[Chapter 1 - The Bond-Servant](#)

[Chapter 2 - The Servant Spirit and the Servant Mind](#)

[Chapter 3 - The Wise Master-BUILDER](#)

[Chapter 4 - The Gospel of the Wise Master-BUILDER](#)

[Chapter 5 - The Servant in Whom God Delights](#)

[Chapter 6 - The Service of the Lord](#)

Chapter 1 - The Bond-Servant

These simple studies are prompted by a deep and long-existing conviction that much of the painful failure in effectiveness in the service of Christ is due to the fact that there has been an altogether too inadequate realisation of-

1. The nature of Christian Service, and
2. The meaning of being the Lord's servant.

This conviction naturally lays great constraint upon one to seek Divine enablement to minister to the ministry of the House of God.

Many there are who have become very weary in well-doing if not discouraged altogether from the work. This may be because the work is not according to the New Testament conception or it may be that the worker is lacking in the basic conception and dynamic of their holy calling. Or it may be that the two co-exist. It is our intention to keep the worker most in view and allow the nature of the work to be seen mainly through the New Testament view of him (or her).

There are so many - to our painful knowledge - who have "taken up" work in churches, Sabbath-schools, and various departments of Christian activity who really have no vital, heart-burning, soul-travailing, connection with the "Eternal purpose" of God in Christ. The result is seen and felt in the spread of disappointment, disillusionment, the "handing-in-of-resignation-spirit," and an epidemic of "the malady of not wanting." Later on we shall have much to say to those who are not of this kind, but who nevertheless are wearied in the greatness of the way.

Here we begin with one submission, namely that for all the disease of inertia; for all the pain of failure; and for all the cries concerning powerlessness, ineffectiveness, and the baffling problems of the work, one of the supreme, fundamental, and indispensable principles and requirements is a right conception of our calling and of that in which we are called to serve, if we are truly God's "born again" ones. Thus, to try and help the discouraged; to renew vision for those in whom it has faded; to raise the level for those who labour without love; and to generally raise the standard of work and workers; these elementary

messages are passed on.

In choosing a model of a servant of Christ we instinctively turn to St. Paul. He seems to us to be the most outstanding in every way, and from the greatness of his achievements, the success of his methods, the amazement of his endurance, and from his dominating objective, we must get back to his own conception of himself as a worker.

He has given us that conception in many significant and suggestive phrases, some of which we select at once. Not once only, but frequently he refers to himself as "the Servant of Jesus Christ."

Now, I venture to say that a right understanding and apprehension of that word "servant" *as Paul used it*, is, without other designations, calculated to revolutionise all of our work for the Master.

The actual word used by Paul was "bondslave," and by it we are thrown back into the social conditions of the world in those days. Slavery was a part of the social life of that time, and the readers of Paul's letters were all quite well acquainted with the ideas and customs connected with that system; indeed some of those readers were slaves themselves. Paul looked upon himself as having been bought by Christ. He gloried in that ownership, and whenever opportunity presented itself he boasted that he was Christ's. To him that ownership was permanent. The slave was bound for life, and there could be no termination of the relationship or obligations.

The transaction has been permanently marked by branding; "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). Professor Mahaffy says: "In the numerous records of manumissions found at Delphi and at other shrines in Greece we have learned the legal process by which a slave gained his liberty. He did not bring his master his earnings, and obtain his freedom with his receipt for the money; but went to the temple of the God, and there paid in his money to the priests; who then with the money bought the slave from his master on the part of the God, and he became for the rest of his life a slave of the God. If at any future time his master or his master's heirs reclaimed him, he had the record of the transaction in the temple.... If he travelled from home and were seized as a runaway slave, what security could he have? Paul gives us the answer. When liberated at the temple the priest, branded him with the "stigmata" of his new master, Apollo. Now Paul's words acquire a new and striking application. He had

been the slave of sin; but he had been purchased by Christ, and his new liberty consisted in his being the slave of Christ. Henceforth, he says, let no man attempt to reclaim me; I have been marked with the brand of my new master, Jesus Christ." This will also throw light on numerous other utterances of Paul when such words as "Servant," "Freedom," "Liberty," etc., are used.

On the one hand this Pauline conception of the absolute and indelible proprietorship of Christ throws much of our modern "service" into striking contrast. Rather than being in willing, full, and free servitude, vassalage, and slavery, to Christ, we often regard our service as a kind of religious V.A.D. affair. *[Editor's note: Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) in the UK provided medical assistance in time of war.]* We may be interested, we may be philanthropic, we may be condescending or we may be dutiful, but we are certainly not under any compulsion. We can do pretty much as we like about it, and if things do not suit us, we can either "throw up" our work altogether, or go where we shall be more appreciated, or where things are smoother sailing. So today, the "worker" too often makes the cause serve him or her instead of being the servant of the cause. Paul took his directions as to sphere, time, and kind of work from his Master, Christ, and relegated every concern to Him. He was not his own, and he could not use either his powers or his time as directed by the flesh. But on the other hand he was fully aware and convinced that this "slavery" to Christ was for him the greatest thing in the world. He had caught the true significance of the Master's invitation to "Take my yoke... and you shall find rest unto your souls." That to Paul meant control and direction for the most serviceable life.

The stream rushes aimlessly, frivolously, and noisily on, until it is yoked by a water-wheel, and then by its arrest it grinds the grain to feed mankind.

The wind blows wildly to no purpose on the sea until the mariner yokes it with his sail, and thus it is harnessed to bear the enriching cargoes from shore to shore.

To capture the electricity which would otherwise be lost, we suspend our telegraph wires, and direct it intelligently along them, bringing the whole world into an intimate association. And so, as in these and many other ways, the yoke is the symbol of useful control, and serviceable direction, Paul knew that the yoke of Christ's service and association would make his life more fruitful than his own independence. There is a liberty which leads to havoc, ruin, uselessness, and remorse. But the supreme element in Paul's abandonment to Christ was a

strong, clear sense of what Christ had done for him, and a perpetual consciousness of what Christ was to him. There is nothing which makes slaves of us more than love, and it is an ecstatic and sublime slavery which never wants release, and only dreads that a breach might at some time come. In the captivity of Christ's love, Paul would ever be found doing everything which would preserve it from suffering hunger in his life, and he would ever be found praying that the "marks" might be burnt more and more deeply into his soul.

Who that one moment, has the least descried Him,
Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar.
Doth not despise all excellence, beside Him,
Pleasures and powers that are not and that are.

I am persuaded that nothing shall sunder
Us from the love that saveth us from sin,
Lift it or lose hereover or hereunder,
Pluck it hereout or strangle it herein.

In summarising what we have said, let us clearly point out that for effectual Christian service and the more powerful corporate testimony of the Church, it must be realised that the Divine calling and equipment for the prophetic, or pastoral, or teaching, or evangelistic, or apostolic work is not centred in one man in any given community, but that these personal gifts are distributed over the whole Church. Every true disciple of Christ is called to be a "servant of the Lord" and should prayerfully seek to know in what specific capacity He calls them to serve; not taking up work at random, but having sought His guidance, they should give themselves earnestly, devotedly, and vigorously to their special ministry, and regard their calling as from God.

The "marks" of Christ must be seen upon His servants whether in the place where the Lord's people assemble, the business, the home, or the social circle, and he must ever be proud to say of Him, "whose I am, and whom I serve."

A vital relationship with Christ born of a deep personal appreciation of what He has done for, and daily is to our souls, and a clear understanding with a profound conviction of what He wishes to do through our instrumentality; these covered by a complete and utter abandonment to Him, are the only legitimate grounds for His service. Of such servants the world and the "Church" stands in tragic and pathetic need, and by such all problems of ineffectiveness and failure are solved.

Such never take up the work lightly, and therefore never give it up easily - if at all. I am more and more convinced that the problems of the untouched masses, the leakage of young people, will be solved most lastingly and fruitfully; not by social organisations or increased machinery, but by the type of workers for Christ who have this work committed to them. Every Christian must conceive of himself or herself as being definitely called by God into the "Fellowship of His Son" and as "Workers together with Him," and that this calling is a solemn and irrevocable ordination to "the work of the ministry." (Read carefully Ephesians 4:12 R.V.)

To be Christ's own purchased possession; and to be Christ's own controlled, directed, and equipped servant, is to have the strength of a great assurance that nothing can separate you from Him; that you work under supreme authority; that all the resources of Christ are at your disposal; and that while doing His work there can be no ultimate failure, unless He is to ultimately fail, which is impossible. This is a service which is eternal and supreme, and is only the probation for "higher service," where and when "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face."

Christ! I am Christ's! and let the name suffice me,
Ay, for me, too, He greatly hath sufficed;
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you,
Paul has no honour and no friend but Christ.

Yes, through life, death, through sorrow and through sinning,
He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

Chapter 2 - The Servant Spirit and the Servant Mind

So far we have spoken of the specific relationship to Christ suggested by the term "Bond-servant." We shall proceed to think of the deeper nature of this relationship and of the vital principle back of it. We are familiar with the designation of the Lord Jesus Himself as "The Servant of Jehovah," and we know that in type and declaration that conception of Him occupies considerable place in the Scriptures. The Ox throughout represents Him in the twofold aspect of service and sacrifice - one thing, never separated. Of Himself He said one all inclusive thing, "The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom." In sharing - not the redeeming activity of Christ, but - the outworking purpose of that specific activity, one thing is said of the servant of the Lord, "To you it has been given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake."

It is so important, beloved, that we should be clear on this matter of service, and it will save us so much sorrow and heartbreak if we have this right as early as possible. We do not want to spend time in pointing out the tremendous mistakenness which prevails far and wide in this respect. "Christian service" has come to be a realm in which all the acquisitive, ambitious, obtrusive, assertive, self-seeking, and numerous other elements of the natural man have been vented and taken hold. It has created a system in which *human* distinctions are the order of the day. Yes, and much more which it is too painful to mention. We need an adjustment of our minds by a true spiritual perception of the real nature of service, and it will be well for us ever to remember that all work *for* Christ is not service *to* Christ. A child may be very well meaning and industrious in its "helping mother" (?), but poor mother may find rather more work created than done.

Now let us say right away with emphasis that the indispensable and basic thing to real service is

The Servant Spirit and the Servant Mind

In Philippians 2 the Holy Spirit says through Paul "Let this mind be in you

which was in Christ Jesus, Who... took the form of a bondservant." Now this passage is a sequel to John 13:7: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterward." There is a very vital principle involved here. Let us study the thing carefully.

There are three sides to it or phases of it; the Divine, the human, and the Satanic. Take the human first. The Master and His disciples had come in after a tiring day: dusty, hot, and weary. They had no paid servants, so that they would either sit down to supper as they were, or wash one another's feet. But this was a servant's job and these men were wont to discuss who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. It was not likely that such a mind would submit to the slave's duties. They were probably each standing upon dignity, prestige, and pride. Possibly Peter was not the least offender, for when the Master girded Himself with a towel and poured out water it says "He cometh to Simon." Here commenced a terrible unveiling of Simon's mind. The first disclosure is made when Simon says "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" Here is *self-will* asserting itself against the will of the Lord. It is self-will rising up upon a basic pride, an exposed and shamed pride. The Master's answer is "If I wash thee not thou has no part with me." At the suggestion of parting with Christ Simon leaps forward - "Not my feet only but my hands and my head." In effect - "I am after all I can get." Here is self-interest, self-enrichment, self-realisation. The principle back of the Master's act is entirely missed because self fills the horizon.

Before the chapter is concluded Simon is strongly declaring that he will lay down his life for the Master, a declaration which had a sorry issue in the hour of its testing. And in this connection self-confidence and self-sufficiency are unveiled. All this led to Satan's triumph and Simon's defeat. It has ever been so. The breakdown and ruin of man has always been because of his self-life, from Adam onward.

Simon was obtained by Satan for sifting because Satan had a stake in him which gave him a judicial claim and right over Simon. Christ served the Father to the full because Satan had "nothing in Him." We must come back here, but let us turn to the Satanic side. Isaiah tells us (chap, 14) that Satan was hurled from the glory and fell into so great depths of ruin because he said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the Most High." He aspired to equality with God. Ambition for power where the power was God's alone; mastery where service was the order; these were the motives operating. This brought his ruin, and then by prompting Adam to act by

the same motive the ruin of the race was accomplished.

How is all this to be remedied? By reversing the order. There was one who had a right to equality with God - "who being on equality with God" - but who - contrary to Lucifer - "thought it not something to be grasped at." This one, in order to get down to the depths of the ruin and destroy the works of the devil, emptied Himself, humbled Himself, took the form of a bond-servant and became *obedient* unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Thus only could the *will* of God be done in the universe; the will which destroys the other will of Satan in the world and in man, for self-will is Satan-will.

So, when the Master said "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," He was pointing to the day when by the Spirit's illumination they would see that self-emptying and laying down of one's self was the principle of salvation, redemption, and the greatest service. He told them so clearly that they should and must lay down their lives ("souls," self-life) for one another. It is most significant, therefore, that the servant-mind of the Master in action should at once meet the impact of that vaunting self-principle in Simon which is the Satanic stake and resistance.

From this review of the position from the Divine, the Satanic, and the human standpoint, we ought to see quite clearly that the matter of service is infinitely more than busy-ness in religious causes, or earthly activities in Christian interests; it is the accomplishment of a heavenly will and Divine purpose which registers its impact in the breaking of another foreign will and destroying the works of the devil. This is the force of "obedience," and the "not my will," and this is the servant-mind and servant-spirit.

Thus, further, we must see that the relationship of bond-servants is in the very nature and essence of redemption. The blood by which we have been redeemed has become the means of a covenant of service. Amongst other things, when Israel was redeemed or delivered from the slavery of Egypt the blood of the Passover Lamb - formed into an encircling doorway as it was shed on the threshold and sprinkled above and on either side - involved and implied that they went through and out to be God's servant. Indeed the demand of Jehovah was "Let my people go *that they may serve me!*"

When a slave in Israel had fulfilled his time and could claim his liberty but preferred to remain with his master, he was taken on to the *threshold* and his ear

was bored with an awl; the blood fell on the threshold and he and his master stepped across that blood, and by so doing a covenant of service - now the service of love - was entered upon. To have stepped UPON the blood and "trodden it under foot" would have been to have "counted it an unholy thing," but passing over ("passover") it hand in hand, was a covenant too sacred to ever be broken. So we are reminded that "'we are not our own, we are bought with a price, even the precious blood."

The basic vision of all true service is that of the Lord high and lifted up, His train filling the Temple, resulting in ourselves being smitten to the ground with a realisation of our own worthlessness which forever makes us - not masters - but slaves, and which necessitates an abiding application of blood-soaked, fire-impregnated coal from the altar if we are to be sent-ones, His servants. Might it not be laid to our charge that our vision of service held ourselves high and lifted up and filling the frame as the goal, until we saw the Lord, and then - in that light - ourselves worthless. The Lord's need is to have *bond*-servants: such as - even though the extreme pressure at some time might make them say that they would "no more speak in this Name" - find that they cannot forbear for long, but, cost what it may, they must be in it and at it, the fire is in their bones and that zeal of His house eats them up. May we be such, and may the true ground and motive of this fellowship in service be :-

I love, I love my Master,
I will not go out free!
For He is my Redeemer,
He paid the price for me.
I would not leave His service,
It is so sweet and blest;
And in the weariest moments
He gives the truest rest.

My Master shed His life-blood
My vassal life to win,
And saves me from the bondage
Of tyrant self and sin.
He chose me for His service,
And gave me power to choose
That blessed, perfect freedom
Which I shall never lose.

I would not halve my service,
His only it must be!
His *only*, Who so loved me
And gave Himself for me.
Rejoicing and adoring,
Henceforth my song shall be -
"I love, I love my Master,
I will not go out free!"

Chapter 3 - The Wise Master-Builder

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9).

The building similes of the New Testament are fairly well known. From the time when Christ said "Upon this Rock will I *build* my church," the conception is maintained in the nature of the object and the designation of the worker.

The subject is dealt with from various aspects, such as:-

1. The Lord the Architect and Chief Builder.

"The pattern of the things in the heavens" Heb. 9:23.

"I will build" (Matt. 16:18).

"We are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9) etc.

2. The Church as the House over which Christ is the Head.

"As a Son over His own House, whose House are we" (Heb. 3:6).

3. The Church as a Building.

"The household of God, built upon the foundation... Jesus Christ the chief corner, in Whom all the building fitly framed... an holy temple... in Whom ye are builded" (Eph. 2:19-22).

"Living stones built up a spiritual house."

"The stone which the builders rejected" (1 Peter 2:5,7) etc.

4. The individual believer is a building, a temple (1 Cor. 3:16).

5. The Servant of the Lord is a builder; as above.

There is a less obvious phase of this subject which contains some important factors. This is in a word used very frequently, namely the word which is usually translated "edify." The verb or its substantive "edification" occurs in some form or other about twenty times in the New Testament, and in every instance except one it is used by Paul. The one exception is in Acts 9:31, a book written undoubtedly under Paul's superintendence. The fact is important in as much as it implies or declares a unity of truth and revelation. The nature of the Church is

thus at least signified throughout Paul's letters, and it gives a distinct "Pauline" flavour to the Hebrew letter.

If we give some examples and the reader will change the italicised words to "build" or its correlatives, much light will be gained and the true idea of the work will be seen.

"The churches had rest and were *edified*" (Acts 9:31).

"We do all things for your *edifying*" (2 Cor. 12:19).

"*Edify* one another" (1 Thess. 5:11).

"For the *edifying* of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

"Unto the *edifying* of itself in love" (Ephes. 4:16).

"All things may be lawful but all things do *not edify*" (1 Cor. 10:23).

"We ought not to please ourselves, but let everyone try to please his neighbour for his good unto *edification*" (Rom. 15:1,2).

"Let us follow after the things wherewith one may *edify* another" (Rom. 14:19).

Having said this much we proceed to speak of a very vital and indispensable qualification which is basic to this great and responsible ministry. This spiritual equipment is related to the whole subject of God's building in both Old and New Testaments.

The eternal conception of the Church as a spiritual house or building runs through all the Scriptures, both historic, poetic, and prophetic. When Solomon was chosen to build a house for the Name of the Lord the one supreme need he recognised to be "a wise and an understanding heart." When he wrote the book of Proverbs his theme was "Wisdom" personified. There is a strong prophetic strain in this book. It is generally recognised that the key to the book is to change the title "Wisdom" to "Jesus Christ." By so doing the book leaps into new meaning and life. Take in connection with our theme such a passage as "Wisdom hath built her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." Here is a forecast of Him whose name is "Wisdom." "Christ the Wisdom of God." "Made unto us Wisdom," building His Church upon the sevenfold glory of His Person. We

would earnestly urge that "wisdom" in the N.T. be "looked up." It will be found to be related to "the mystery" and both the "wisdom" and the "mystery" are Christ. Both have been hidden away by God from the ages and generations. Hidden in all the Scriptures, and Paul distinctly says that at the appointed time even the Prophets divulge the secret thing through the chosen interpreters (Rom. 16:25-26). This is connected with the unveiling of the "Church which is His Body." Now Paul as the elect vehicle of this revelation prays for those to whom he writes with regard to it, that they might be given "a spirit of *wisdom* and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:17,18).

To pursue this truth is to have abundant proof that -

1. The building of a spiritual house is in progress.
2. God has had this matter in mind from all eternity and has kept it in mind all down the ages,
3. The present age is that which is characterised by-
 - (a) The revelation of the purpose;
 - (b) The specific activity of God in this connection.
4. The work which is supremely co-operation with God is that of gathering out the "living stones" and bringing them into corporate relationship.
5. For this work there must be-
 - (a) A revelation of "the Eternal purpose" to all who are to be "workers together... with God."
 - (b) A spiritual equipment with a wisdom which infinitely transcends the wisdom of this world.

Into these five points we have gathered vast ranges of Divine truth and purpose and have set the bounds, defined the nature, and indicated the principles and laws of "Christian" service and ministry.

The two last subdivisions go to the heart of Paul's (rather the Holy-Spirit's) designation, of the servant of the Lord as "a wise master builder." They relate to the object - who and what Jesus Christ is - and all the methods and means by which the object is to be arrived at.

Our first emphasis, then, is laid upon the fact that for the work of God a wisdom and a skill, different from and far transcending that of man at his best, is essential. A wisdom which is the gift of God. A wisdom which, however, is very often foolishness to men, and yet which - when the work is done - makes the wisdom of men look foolish.

Wherein, then, does this wisdom lie? What are the features of it? Paul answers the questions for us in various ways.

Firstly, "I have laid a foundation," and "Other foundation can no man lay." The object in view must have *the* foundation most suited to it. There is only *one* possible foundation for this spiritual house. It is God's eternally elect and appointed foundation. It is the very bedrock of the universe, deeper than soil, subsoil, and strata. There is no volcanic eruption which can upheave it, and no blast which can shake or split it. There is no other foundation for life and work of which this is true, hence the supreme wisdom of making this the basis of all procedure.

"Upon *this* rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," said the Divine Architect. Upon what rock? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!"

Jesus Christ, infinite Son of God, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form, and all-inclusive Son of Man, the federal Head of a new race; the foundation of the universe, but in a special sense the foundation of the Church. The most startling, stunning, upheaving, shattering thing that ever happened to a mortal was the revelation of who Jesus is which came to Saul of Tarsus as he journeyed bent upon doing despite to the name which was so soon to be spoken to him out of high heaven. Humbled as no power on earth could have humbled him he asks: "Who art thou, Lord." (Lord = ruler, principal.) He might not have been surprised if the answer had been in one of the great Hebrew designations of God, such as Jehovah, although he might have been perplexed as to how he was persecuting Him. But when the answer came straight, strong, clear, "I am *Jesus!*" it was calculated to send a man off food and sleep for days and nights, and then to the back side of a desert - to Arabia - to contemplate the ruin of his enterprise and get the foundation for his new edifice, Jesus! At once persecuted and sovereign; on the throne and persecuted. Jesus, done to death by Saul's circle and in the place of transcendent majesty! Jesus - "the Nazarene impostor" - God! Alas, alas!

Jesus is God! The glorious bands
Of golden angels sing
Songs of adoring praise to Him,
Their Maker and their King.
He was true God in Bethlehem's crib,
On Calvary's cross true God;
He Who in heaven eternal reigned,
In time on earth abode.

Jesus is God! Oh could I now
But compass land and sea,
To teach and tell this single truth,
How happy should I be!
Oh, had I but an angel's voice
I would proclaim so loud!
Jesus, the good, the beautiful,
Is everlasting God!

Was Saul a master-builder of Judaism? Then it was true in his case indeed that "the Stone which the builders rejected, the same had become the Head." "Disallowed *indeed* of men, but with God elect, precious." Surely also it was true in his case that "Whosoever shall fall on *this Stone* shall be broken, but on whomsoever it falleth it shall grind him to powder." Paul, by experience, knew something of the impact of Jesus in risen power and that is the crux of the whole matter. Neither Peter nor Paul arrived at their Christology by mental processes, by reasonings, by training, by the schools, by research. In each case it was by revelation.

"Blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but my Father."

"It pleased God... to reveal His Son *in* me."

"Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." Here then are the two sides to the basic wisdom of the "wise master-builder." The fact of Jesus - Son of God, and very God; Son of Man, without Whom the universe as a whole and the race in particular must collapse and cease to be, and without Whom that elect instrument without which the universal purpose of God can never be realised - the Church, the House of

God - can never be built; for He and He alone is the Foundation. Then on the other side this fact and its nature proclaimed on the ground of a revelation which is an experience, and experience which is a revelation. They who pioneered this "Testimony of Jesus" were neither authorities, experts, or exponents; they were "witnesses." The two things are one, the fact and the fact known by revelation of the Holy Ghost. No one can be a builder and no Divine building can be built without this basis and equipment.

There are many things to which the name of the Lord is being affixed which are being constructed, and which appear fine and great and *like* "the Church," but the twofold reality is neither in the builders or the buildings. They are destined to collapse when God's hurricane and fire test every man's work. Good works; philanthropy, hospitality, reform, education, religion, relief, etc., may be the products, or by-products of what is called "Christian civilisation," and things for which to be profoundly grateful, but let us not confuse these with "a new creation," regeneration, a being "born from above."

The Church is nothing which man can build by any resource in himself personally or, collectively. The Church is an organism not an organisation. "Behold, I show you a mystery, we are members of His flesh and of His bones." Build that, if you can! Launch that; organise that; "run" that! It cannot be done. It is the spontaneous outworking of spiritual forces released, in the acceptance by faith of tremendous facts concerning Christ; which facts are proclaimed out of experience in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Not the theological Christ; not the doctrinal Christ; not the Christ of the letter; much less the Jesus of history; but the Christ of Eternity in all the meaning of His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into the Throne of God; *revealed in the heart by the Holy Spirit*. This alone is authority to preach, to serve, to occupy position, to "build" in relation to the house of God. It is folly to spend time and strength otherwise. It is wisdom to labour on this foundation.

We shall proceed later to speak of The Gospel of the Wise master-builder.

Chapter 4 - The Gospel of the Wise Master-BUILDER

Having spoken of the fact of the spiritual edifice which God is building in this age; of the specific endowment of Divine wisdom essential to all His "Fellow-workers"; and of the first expression of that wisdom in the matter of the Foundation, we now go on to speak of the means used by the Holy Spirit for the effecting of this purpose of God. Just a word on the method which leads to the means. It is perfectly clear in the Word that the divinely appointed method in the first place is the preaching which is a proclaiming and an announcement. There are many other contributing ministries not less important, as they are all interdependent, but the first in order - not necessarily to large audiences - (there are instances in Scripture of preaching to one) is the proclamation and announcement of a certain comprehensive and all-inclusive fact. This being the case it is of very great importance that we should know that fact and its inclusions. Many inquiries have been set up as to the unsatisfactory situation which exists for so great an area in relation to the gospel and Christian life. Questions concerning wide-spread indifference, gospel-hardening, wholesale backsliding, disappointing "converts," ineffective Christians, low level of spiritual life, worldliness in the "Church," the misleading of believers by false doctrine and deceiving spirits, spiritual immaturity, etc. etc.. To some extent such conditions existed from the beginning, even in the great apostolic days, but it was then much more the exception than now. It was then something in the midst of the greater and better conditions which made the apostolic Church so mighty in the world. Now it would seem to be the other way round. The genuine thing is the smaller company in the midst, of the more general failure.

Far be it from us to join in the tirade against that which bears "His" name, but we are so constantly confronted with the heart-breaking story of the difficulties of service, the disappointment of workers, the despair of Christians, that we must enter the inquiry and seek to help. Now without pressing it as our conviction - which certainly it is - we would present it as a question: may not this state be largely due to an inadequate gospel? Is the means used such as is calculated to achieve the tremendous end in view? Have we an adequate conception of what that end is? May it not be that such an inadequate conception has resulted in the

eliminating or neglecting of essentials on the one hand and the labouring of certain unworthy factors on the other? With regard to the latter; is fear of hell and gain of heaven really worthy of the "so great salvation"? Is the horrors of being doomed to eternal punishment, giving rise to all the sensational means and methods by which fear is meant to be produced, really a sufficient motive? Is the personal going to heaven with all the personal gains and pleasures associated therewith, producing all the sentimental appeals intended to capture by pathos, emotion, excitement, pleasure, etc., really mighty enough to bring through the eternal purpose? Are souls ever born without travail somewhere, and will they ever get through without that travail becoming experimental in themselves to some extent? May it not be the gospel of "escape from hell and going to heaven," with all the cheap elements of its proclamation which has nauseated so many, turning them away in disgust; which prejudices the true; and which has become played out in the emotions of many who can no longer be appealed to along these lines, setting up a gospel deadlock?

Perhaps, after all, the best method of dealing with such questions is the positive one, that is considering:

The Nature of the Gospel of the Wise Master-BUILDER

It is not that gospel itself in terms of doctrine that we propose to consider. That is dealt with elsewhere in the general teaching through this paper. But some essentials of that gospel.

In the first place there must be:

An Adequate Setting and Motive

It is absolutely essential that if all the great purpose of God with its vast inclusions is to be entered into; and if there is to be an adequate impact upon men, there must be the sufficient background of the New Testament evangel. It would be very salutary if every "Christian worker" were to sit down or kneel down and prayerfully consider the background of New Testament preaching, exhortation, admonition, entreaty, appeal, instruction. It will be discovered that that background begins in eternity past, before times eternal, in the eternal counsels of God. It will reveal a conception and design with which every movement and gesture of God throughout the ages is related. It will explain the existence of the universe and the purpose of the whole creation. It will set the

sovereignty of the Son at the centre and make it also the circumference. It will reveal that each soul saved is a vindication of the wisdom of God in plan and creation, and the justification of the existence of the world. (See articles on ["The Unveiling of Jesus Christ."](#)) Salvation, conversion, is never something in itself. An ultra individualism in being saved or in seeking the salvation of others is contrary to the Scriptures; and is baneful. The "therefores" and the "wherefores" of the New Testament are pegs upon which hang vast ranges and mighty weights of spiritual significance and reason.

Why should men be saved? Why should I be utterly abandoned to Christ? Why should I accept the Cross of Christ in its total application to all the elements of my natural life? Why should I leave all for the Gospel's sake? These and many other such questions must be answered in the light of that infinite background of "the eternal purpose" in the first place.

True it is that conversions take place from the preaching of the immediate issues of sin and hell, and salvation from these. But so often such remains for a long time with but the personal salvation and the immediate issue and a single note. Why should maturity be so long delayed, the nursery so long occupied? Why not the full compass of Divine meaning from the beginning? Again we ask, may not the wide-spread failure of a certain evangelism be due to an inadequate motive?

Then in the next place there must be:

An Adequate Dynamic

There is no subject which concerns the servants of the Lord more than that of spiritual power and effectiveness. We have prayed about this until we despaired. We have read books upon it until we were sick. Yes, we have spoken about it ourselves until shame has silenced us.

We see the Apostolic example and demonstration.

We know the Master's promise.

We know the doctrine and teaching basic to power.

But what of the power itself?

Far be it from us to think that we can improve upon, or profitably add to, all that

has been written. But if the Lord has taken us through an experience which has made possible an unfolding of His secrets, it will not be conceit on our part if we humbly place such at the service of His children. It is not sufficient that we recognise the need for power and pray for it. Indeed it might be very unsafe for the gospel and for the name of the Lord if it were given. It is of primary importance that we should know the nature and the basis of power. It is equally important that we should recognise that it is that power which has as its object the building of the "House," the "Temple" of God. In the Old Testament whenever there is a need or a desire to give a *supreme* example of the power of God, reference is always made to Israel's exodus and especially their passage of the Red Sea and Egypt's destruction therein. In the New Testament the paramount demonstration of the power of God of which the Old Testament example is but the type, is the Resurrection of Christ.

From Genesis to Revelation resurrection is invariably the basis upon which the direct purpose of God is carried forward. Every instrument which is used in that *direct* purpose has to be wrought on to a basis of resurrection. In another place we shall shortly be showing how this is so. Here we just affirm the fact. In order that this truth may be the more apparent God took pains to secure a situation which was utterly hopeless apart from that miracle. The persons concerned were each brought to the place where there was no resource in themselves. The situations into which they were brought also proffered no possible ground of hope. Death reigned! Then God came in.

There is no more desperately hopeless situation than that which naturally existed when Christ died, and the disciples knew it. Sin has triumphed. Satan has triumphed. Hell has triumphed! Unless - unless He can rise again, and then sin, Satan and hell are vanquished. For this in His case and for an *abiding demonstration of the fact - this all inclusive fact*, there must be the exercise of the exceeding greatness of the power of God. And as in His case so in the case of every one who is to be a living testimony to *that* power, there must be a background which is hopeless; not theoretically but actually and experimentally hopeless. The death of the Lord Jesus did register the verdict of God concerning the Adam race in every unit. That race was not only incapable of realising the purpose of God, but now had elements in it which were positively inimical to that purpose. God never intended that such beings - such a species - as the fallen Adam race should occupy this world; it was never made for such, and in the end He will literally carry into effect that which He representatively did, in the death of Christ, namely, sweep them away, "cut them off from the land of the living,":

even all those, who are not "in Christ Jesus."

In the meantime the "eternal purpose" proceeds, but it proceeds only in those and through those who have firstly recognised the death of Jesus as *their* death; and then accepted it in one all-inclusive reckoning of faith, and trusted God to make it actual; and then claimed and apprehended by faith their inheritance in the Risen Lord, even resurrection life. The very nature of that life will progressively make clear that it is a thing alone and can tolerate no mixture. It becomes the exclusive basis of all the activities of God within and through His children relative to the eternal purpose. But it is *resurrection life*, mighty, unconquerable, indestructible, deathless. *The Holy Spirit is the seal of the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit's law of operation is Divine Life.*

By that life the Holy Spirit constitutes the believer a personal demonstration of the resurrection, and the word of testimony thereto is only a consequence, but it is a consequence. Pentecost was on an eighth day, eight being the resurrection number in the Scriptures. The experimental spiritual ground upon which the Church stood at Pentecost was the Resurrection. The testimony which the Church publicly bore at Pentecost was to the Resurrection. Paul's whole life and work rested upon his own *experience* of the Resurrection. We have said enough to lead to an enquiry along this line, but let it be understood that the basis of power is Resurrection union with Christ. The principle of the "eternal purpose" is Resurrection Life in Christ. The Holy Spirit comes only upon Resurrection ground. Power is to "know Him and the *power* of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."

Chapter 5 - The Servant in Whom God Delights

"But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen... Thou art my servant." Isaiah 12:8,9.

"Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the nations." Isaiah 42:1.

"Who is blind as my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? Who is blind as he that is made perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant." Isaiah 42:19.

"Behold my servant..." Isaiah 52:13.

A closer reading of the context of the above passages will make clear that they do not all refer to one and the same "servant." Two servants are mentioned, one in chapter 12, the other in chapter 42 and 52. The one a disappointment and heartbreak; the other the Lord's delight. The one a failure and a reproach; the other a triumph and glory. With chapter 40 a new prospect opens up; blessings and promises and hopes are made known, but these are all secured in and by this latter Servant. The nations are to reap the benefit and their "desirable things" are to come and judgment is to be established for them, but only through this Servant in whom the Lord has His delight. The first servant has failed, and his failure is contained in one comprehensive word - "idolatry." It is indeed a comprehensive word. The Old Testament sense is still the only idea which the majority have of idolatry; that is, the worship of heathen gods in the form of images, etc. But in the New Testament it is clearly revealed to be a matter of the spirit or heart, and therefore is of far wider dimensions and far more inclusive. For instance, covetousness is said to be idolatry.

The Cause of Failure is Idolatry; What is Idolatry?

Idolatry is a divided heart. If in any particular the heart is divided, and the Lord does not have the full and final place, that is idolatry. A reservation, another consideration and influence from another direction, an affection, ambition,

possession, pursuit, indulgence, which stands in the way of the utter will of God and His Glory is idolatry. Upon that thing, and because of that divided heart the heavenly purpose will crash, the vocation will break down, the servant be a disappointment, and the blessing to the world be hindered. That servant will be set aside.

Worldliness is Idolatry?

But worldliness is not necessarily going out with the world in its pursuits, pleasures, passions, interests. Worldliness is world-likeness, and world-likeness is to be actuated by the spirit of the world. What is that? In a word, it is personal interest. This can be just as strong in the things of the Kingdom of God as in other things. Ambition, reputation, prestige, influence, power, opportunity, advantage, recognition, appreciation, success, following, acceptance, favour, place, etc., this is the world-spirit. They all contain - recognised or unrecognised - pride, jealousy, envy, covetousness, prejudice, unbelief, bitterness, and many other things which come out when such considerations are thwarted or checked.

"The Lord looketh on the heart." "The heart is deceitful above all things." This deceitfulness is found in the fact that so many who started well, making great sacrifices, paying a great price, suffering much for their stand, and being greatly used of God, have eventually come to a place of self-importance, importance to God, importance to God's work, and this quite imperceptibly, so that they still regarded themselves as the truest and humblest of men, but not recognising that their real *spiritual* ministry and message had gone, and an "ability" which is of man has taken the place of that ability which is of God through utter dependence and brokenness upon Him. This deceitfulness works so slowly, so minutely, so adorned, as to defeat any detection but that of the eye which is "as a flame of fire," but at length, however great may be the *seeming* gain, for all the deepest spiritual purposes of God that servant is a disappointment, a heartbreak, and is set aside.

Loud and strong as may have been his denunciations of worldliness; clever and able as may have been his exposures and analyses; the horror of this thing has not haunted his secret chamber of prayer. The very extensiveness and ponderousness of his programme has been the occasion which this thing has silently and subtly taken to insinuate its sinister presence.

All this only suggests the direction in which there stands

The Servant in whom the Lord Delights.

The 19th verse is the key to the character and life of such. Here, of course, is the Lord Jesus, the model servant of Jehovah. As such we are regarding Him here. His atoning work as in chapter 53 stands by itself. We do not share that service, and in that matter we cannot be like Him. But in the principles of His life we are called to be one with Him, and as they truly govern us, so we also may approximate to the place in Christ where the Lord's delight may be in us. Two things, then, are said to characterise Him; blindness and deafness.

Israel, the failing servant, was said to be both of these; but Israel was blinded and deafened by idolatry. The Lord Jesus was

Blinded and Deafened by Devotion.

While there is a blindness and deafness which is a tragedy, there is that which is a glory.

Satan found in Him no ears or eyes for any of his voices and visions when in the wilderness he sought to suggest that necessity has no law; love has no law, and success has no law. Even when these suggestions are wrapped up in scripture the true Servant of the Lord will not listen or look. Starvation, long delay and rejection, and the bitterness of Calvary are chosen rather than self-preservation, self-advancement, and self-realisation if these mean a hair's breadth deviation from the will of God. God's end can never be assured if God's method is not honoured. No crowd can rush this one into a mock kingdom which will complicate the spiritual issue of His mission. No kindly solicitude for His safety and comfort expressed through the sentiment of an intimate friend can divert Him from the accepted way, and make Him insensible to the fact that it is still the adversary - the serpent - twisting and fawning. No bribe in the nature of a promised belief in Him and a following, even when things have reached the point of the most unspeakable suffering can bring Him from the Cross. This Servant is

A Whole Burnt Offering.

He is here in recognition of God's rights and is out to secure them for Him. The rights are all gathered up in one phrase, "Thy Will," and that will requires the uttermost abandonment with not a suggestion of "My Will." Such an abandonment will ever make the servant of the Lord to be "not of this world" in

mind and spirit. It will mean many a saying of "Nay." It will bring much misunderstanding: and the opportunists will get all the advancements in a realm of a certain kind of success. Satan will make such the object of his untiring attention. But spiritual value can never be weighed and measured in the judgments of sense, and life must never be measured by the wine drunk but by the wine poured forth.

There are eyes and ears which depend upon blindness and deafness for their sight and hearing. In this representative and model Servant of Jehovah the very fact of His utter blindness and deafness in one realm secured and maintained for Him a vision and a voice in another. Hear Him: "Nothing of Himself... but what He seeth the Father doing, that doeth He." "As I hear I speak." He lives in full view of the heavenly activities of the Father, and within the Oracle of His spirit the voice is never silent. Only for one terrible moment while our sins were all upon Him laid, as the Brazen Altar engulfed Him was that vision withdrawn and that voice hushed. But we need never share that, it relates to atonement for sin, and He has by one offering forever perfected the comers thereunto. He has been found faithful.

May we also present our bodies a living sacrifice, and on no consideration turn from that Cross which means the Will of God fully done. It is not worth it to have our request and leanness of soul as the price. It is no gain to have gratification of the outer eyes and ears and a lost inner vision and voice.

Chapter 6 - The Service of the Lord

Hindrances in Service

The Lord's work makes progress not only in spite of difficulties but frequently by means of them. Service to God is rendered in a world where the Enemy has power and uses it in untiring and varied aggression against all that is done for God. This ceaseless opposition, directed against the glory of Christ, has beneficial effects. It reminds His servants of their inability to do anything in their own strength and of their dependence on the Lord, and casts them upon Him for His ever-ready help. It thereby proves the means of strengthening them to continue their arduous labour with joy of heart, and to face and go through every difficulty, strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and undeterred by any obstacle however formidable.

"But Satan Hindered." (?)

The way in which God turns to good account the Adversary's opposition to His servants is frequently illustrated in the Scriptures. One of the most striking cases is the result of the hindrance placed by Satan against the return of the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica. He would fain have come to them, he says, once and again, but Satan hindered (1 Thess. 2:18). Whatever the actual hindrance was - not improbably it lay in the fact that pledges against the renewal of trouble had been extracted by the city authorities from Jason and the other converts (Acts 17:9) - it nevertheless resulted in the Apostle's writing to them instead. Accordingly, the effect of the Devil's opposition is that we are in possession of the priceless treasures of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. In a similar manner we might trace the circumstances which produced the later Epistles written during Paul's confinement in Rome. Again, in recording the events connected with the penning of one of these very Epistles, he says that the things which had happened to him there had proved to be for the progress of the gospel; for his bonds had become manifest in Christ "throughout the whole Praetorian Guard, and to all the rest." This suggests that the soldiers of this famous regiment, as well as others, had heard the gospel from his lips. A further result of his difficulties he speaks of as follows: "Most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the Word of God without fear" (Phil. 1:12-14, R.V.).

Here, then, was a missionary, hampered in his work, restricted in his activity, and circumscribed in the sphere of his service, the object of Satan's ceaseless and varied hostility. To all appearances the efforts of the enemy had resulted in a serious set-back to the spread of the gospel. One is inclined perhaps to conceive that greater advances might have been made, had this servant of God been at liberty to continue his journeys, founding new churches, visiting those already established, and otherwise furthering the cause of Christ. Not so in the thoughts and purposes of the Lord. God is not thwarted by the work of His foes. "None can stay His hand." How little we are able to calculate the far-reaching effects of the Apostle's testimony in Rome, or the full extent of the meaning of his inspired statement, "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel"! And after all, was he not following in the steps of His Master whose faithful and devoted servant he was, and whose own claims and authority had seemed to the world absolutely invalidated by the overwhelming degradation and shameful humiliation of the Cross? The Death of Christ was but a seeming defeat. The Enemy who sought to accomplish it met his doom in his apparent success. The secret of the glorious victory over that effort of the Evil One was made known in Eden, at his first attempt to thwart the Divine will. The bruising of the heel of the Seed of the woman, would mean the bruising of the head of the foe himself. The death of the Son of God was the destruction of His adversary.

Satan Buffeted

We similarly see God's wonder-working way in the matter of physical weakness. How many a worker who is tried in health feels that much more effective service could be rendered if only he were free from the malady! Here again the lesson of Paul's life had been recorded for our comfort. Doubtless he felt that his loved ministry was much impeded by his "thorn in the flesh." He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. Though his request was not granted, the Lord saw to it, not only that he should be comforted, but that all that was needed by way of explanation should be made known to him. There was both the preventive side of the trouble and the empowering side. Not only did he learn that it was inflicted lest he should be exalted overmuch through the greatness of the revelations he had received, but he also learned gladly to glory in his weaknesses, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Let us note, too, the abiding effort which the gracious word of the Lord had upon him. He records it not as a mere historical incident, but as something the comfort of which he had felt ever since, and was still enjoying. "He *hath said* (not 'He said') unto me, My

grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). The consequence was that he could say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." That was the outcome of Satan's buffeting. The hindrance became a help. Satan's messenger became the Lord's minister. Many and many a servant of God has been similarly tried. How blessed the comfort of this record of Paul's experience! And how wonderful will be the revelation, in the coming Day, of God's dealings with us in our service here below!

Satan Traduced

We learn from the Apostle of other ways in which his service was hampered. His heart must have been sorely tried by the constant activity of those who traduced him, imputing things to him of which he was not guilty, and seeking to undo his work by misrepresentation and insinuation. This he particularly mentions in the second Epistle to the Corinthians. The gospel had proved fruitful in Corinth, both among Jew and Gentile. During the initial difficulties the Lord had revealed to him that He had "much people in that city." We are therefore not surprised to find that the opposition of the Adversary was vigorous and varied. The character of his ministry was disparaged by influential opponents. He was accused of changing his opinion and of fickleness (2 Cor. 1:17,18); of walking according to the flesh (10:2); of inferior capacities in his ministry (10:10); of acting toward the saints by guile and taking advantage of them for his own ends (12:16,17). Unfavourable comparisons were made between him and other apostles (11:5,6), and the service he had rendered in such disinterestedness and genuine love was in other ways defamed. All this must have been exceedingly burdensome. Moreover these matters required firm handling, not in the spirit of mere self-defence, but for the sake of the Lord's work and the profit of the church. We can understand something of the stress under which this Epistle was written.

There can be scarcely anything more trying for the servant of the Lord than misrepresentation of his motives and methods, and especially when he might have expected that those who act thus would seek an opportunity of an interview with him, and of becoming acquainted with facts. Sometimes it pleases God thus to test faith. Yet even these obstacles are under His control and become His instruments for the carrying out of His purposes. Difficulties are intended to draw us nearer to the Lord. Thus, learning that all our resources lie in Him, we derive from Him the power to enable us, if our private interests are at stake, to manifest the spirit of Christ towards our detractors. If, on the other hand, the honour of His Name and the blessing of His people require that the matter be

taken up in any way, the Lord is ready to impart the wisdom and strength to do so, and from Him alone can we derive it. In each respect the Apostle, who so closely followed the Lord, has set us an example.

"God is His Own Interpreter"

Hindrances in service come from within as well as from without. Against these we ever need to be on the watch. There is always a tendency for our service to become merely mechanical, in other words, void of that spiritual power which must ever be present if we are to be used of God. Only the help of the Holy Spirit is sufficient for the maintenance of that power. It is His gracious ministry to lead us constantly into communion with God, that is to say, into the realisation of fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and this He does through the Word of God. Times of communion, alone with the Lord, undistracted by earthly circumstances, are essential for spiritual vitality in service. We must be first occupied with Christ if we are to be occupied for Him. Indeed, the presentation of our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him" is described as our reasonable (or intelligent) service (Rom. 12:1). The word in this passage denotes that form of service which is itself an act of worship.

Then, again, the influence of the world without is apt to find a ready entrance into our inner life. Contact with the world, inevitable in our work for the Lord, tends to deaden our sensitiveness to sin. For the isolated missionary, surrounded continually by the grossness of heathenism, the conditions are acknowledged to be unspeakably testing in this respect; but nowhere can we afford to be negligent in watching against the gradual encroachment of the power of the world upon our spiritual life, and the consequent diminution of spiritual vigour.

How perfect is the provision made for us by which the hindrances arising from the flesh within may be counteracted and removed! The unremitting ministry of our Great High Priest, the efficacy of His precious blood, the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and the rectifying and guiding power of the Word of God, these are our unfailing resources.

Rewards of Service

To the devoted servant of Christ the service He appoints carries its own reward. The love that has liberated him from the bondage of sin has captivated his soul. For one who appreciates, even in a small measure, what his Redeemer has done

for him, it suffices that he should be the bondservant of Jesus Christ. Grace it is that provides us with service to render. "I was made a minister (or servant)," the Apostle says, "according to the grace of God which was given me" (Eph. 3:7). The unutterable love of Christ is enough to preclude our looking upon any reward of our service as the motive of that service. Still less as the outcome of merit on the servant's part. He Himself taught His disciples to say, after they had fulfilled their service, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do."

There is, however, another side to this, and the Lord constantly directed the hearts of His followers for their encouragement to the reward which would eventually be theirs. Thus, concerning deeds of kindness He said, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward, and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:41,42, R.V.).

Concerning rejection and reproach for His sake, He said, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy: for behold your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:22,23).

Again, concerning self-sacrifice for His sake, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke 18:29,30).

Faithful stewardship would result in the reward of authority hereafter (Luke 12:44), and similarly the Lord's explanation of the parable of the nobleman and his servants who were left to trade with his money, was "Unto every one that hath, to him shall be given; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him" (Luke 19:20).

So elsewhere in the Word of God, the Holy Spirit constantly directs us to have regard to the reward, and warns us of the possibility of losing it. Moses is brought before us as a pattern for our faith in this respect. The reason assigned to his decision to be "evil entreated with the people of God," instead of enjoying

pleasures of sin for a season, was that, "accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

Reproach for Christ was His Present Riches

The reward would come after. That is ever to be the order. Christ Himself, first; the reward He gives, second. Loyalty to Christ will never fail of present blessing and future recompense. Never did a saint suffer spiritually by accumulated wealth accruing from endurance of reproaches for Christ.

The manner in which the Apostle Paul had respect unto the recompense of reward is strikingly brought out in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. Speaking of his service in the gospel, he tells of his efforts to gain both Jew and Gentile; he says, "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof" (1 Cor. 9:22,23, R.V.). How thoroughly the messenger was identified with his message! The blessing wrought by the gospel was his own blessing. There could be no half-heartedness about work carried on like that. He then applies to his service the metaphors of the race-course and the boxing-match, "I therefore so run," he says, "as not uncertainly; so fight I (the Greek word means 'box'; see R.V., margin) as not beating the air: but I buffet my body and bring it into bondage: lest by any means after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected." There was no false step in the running, no random blow in the buffeting. We miss his meaning if we take him to indicate the actual beating of the body in outwardly imposed, ascetic discipline. On the contrary, he kept his natural inclinations and propensities in severe check, in order that his members might be in entire subjection to the will of God for His service. He mortified the deeds of the body. But while he does this for the Lord's sake, as His servant, his eye is on the Judgment Seat. It is possible to be eternally saved by grace as a believer and yet to be disapproved at the time of reward-giving there. In the Olympian games in Greece, a Competitor who had infringed the regulations was pronounced *adokimos* at the *bema*. But the matter did not end there. He was required to place at his own expense a bronze image of Jupiter at the entrance of the arena, as the lasting memorial of his disqualification. The intense solemnity of the possibility of disqualification at the Judgment Seat of Christ, led the Apostle to undergo the rigid discipline mentioned above. Stretching forward to the things that are before, he pressed on "toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The Vital "How" and "What"

There is a solemn passage in the same Epistle regarding reward, and loss of reward, in connection with gospel work and subsequent service in building up assemblies. First, there is the metaphor drawn from agriculture. One labourer plants and another waters. Both are one, as God's fellow-workers. Their rewards are to differ according to the labour of each. Then there is the metaphor of the builder. "If any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:8-13). It is possible to engage in service in connection with the gospel according to methods which may appear attractive and successful, but which are not in conformity to the will of God. The Lord gauges our service, not by its success, but by our faithfulness to Him. Apparent success may after all be the outcome of building wood, hay, and stubble on the foundation. "If any man's work shall abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, but so as by fire." The fire will consume, not purify. Not the man himself is to be burned but his work, work which, figuratively, consists of wood, hay, or stubble, work that has been done in the energy of the natural will, rather than by faithful adherence to the instruction of God's Word under the guidance of the Spirit. How important it is to do all things "according to the pattern that has been shown us"! The theme is continued in the next chapter, where Paul speaks of himself and his fellow-workers as "servants of Christ." In this respect we are not to judge one another before the time. When the Lord comes He "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (4:1-5). We must not act toward our fellow-servants as if we were on the judgment seat. The Judge Himself, by whom actions are weighed, will in that day bestow upon each one the praise that is due.

How faithfully the Apostle wrought in building up the saints! How true to the pattern was his work! Consequently he is able to say with confidence to the Thessalonian saints, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus at His coming?" - lit., "in His Parousia" (1 Thess. 2:19). Similarly the saints at Philippi are his "joy and crown" (Phil. 4:1). Here are rewards open to all, rewards for winning and caring for souls. Then, a special reward is to be given for faithfulness in pastoral work. The under shepherds who have themselves been examples to the flock the while they have shepherded

them, will receive from the Chief Shepherd a crown of glory at His appearing (1 Pet. 5:3,4).

Let all our service be characterised by two things especially. Firstly, let it be rendered "heartily as to the Lord." For "of the Lord we are to receive the reward of the inheritance." Secondly, let our heart's affections be set upon His return. The crown of righteousness is to be given to all them that have loved His appearing. Loving His appearing is something very practical. With the Apostle it meant fighting the good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith (2 Tim. 4:7,8). To the day of reward the Lord Himself looks forward, and almost His last word to His servants is, "Behold I come quickly; and My reward is with Me [suggesting His pleasure in bestowing it], to give every man according as his work shall be."