

Born To Serve

by
Dr. Manford George Gutzke

Born to Serve is both a study of what Christian service involves and a challenge to engage in it. The qualifications; the opportunities, the dangers and the rewards are clearly presented. Experiences of the great leaders of the first century Church and of Christ Himself are used to illustrate the many problems involved in being "workers together with Christ." The inescapable fact that every Christian must face is that his salvation from the penalty of sin through faith in Christ brings with it a binding obligation to share his faith and his experience with others who "sit in darkness." We have been born into God's family to serve.

Contents

1. The Mind of the Servant	3
2. The Work of the Servant	7
3. The Temptation of the Servant	11
4. The Acceptable Servant	15
5. The Obedient Servant	18
6. The Servant's Evangelism	21
7. The Servant's Manner of Life	25
8. The Servant's Service	28
9. The Servant Brings Joy	31
10. The Servant Receives Joy	35
11. The Servant as Ambassador	38
12. The Servant's Joy	41

Chapter 1

The Mind of the Servant

Philippians 1:27-2:13

Do you realize that any service rendered by any Christian is the obedience of his soul to the will of the indwelling Christ?

Everything that ever happens in a group of Christians is the personal action of individual believers in that group. It is a common practice today to use the collective noun "the church" for the actions and the activities of Christians. While the word "church" may be used to refer to a group of believers by way of recording their actions, or by way of referring to their attitudes and plans, it can be misleading. "The church" may be conceived as an entity in itself, as if it were something with a mind and plans of its own: this is not true.

There is, strictly speaking, no such thing in itself as the church. The only way that word is properly used is when we have a number of believers in mind. The primary unit of all human behavior, and thus of all Christian behavior, is the individual. If anything is ever going to be done, it is going to be done one by one by one. It is true the people may work together, but they remain individuals. When I say the primary unit, it is a good deal like saying, "How much money do you have in your pocket?" "I have three dollars. How much money do you have?" "I have ten dollars." Perhaps on payday you could say, "I have fifty-two dollars," but in each case the dollar is the unit. This is what is meant by saying as far as the church is concerned – five Christians, ten Christians, six hundred Christians – that always the individual Christian is the primary unit of that particular group of people. This is very important when one begins to think about serving the Lord.

If the person is not careful, he will speak about serving the Lord but will say, "Well, the church ought to do it." "Who?" His reply: "Well, the church." That will mean *nobody*. It will be a case of everybody's business and it turns out to be *nobody's* business.

The primary unit of all human behavior is the individual. The unit of Christian behavior is the individual. It is the single soul, the one believer, that will be saved.

This example is seen in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The entire congregation may be sitting in their pews, with the officers of the church sharing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the minister may repeat, "Take, eat. This do in remembrance of Me." (See Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19.) The eating is going to be done by one individual at a time. The bread is put into one mouth, down one throat, one at a time. The church itself never eats, as it is incapable of doing so. It is the individual person who eats. Again the minister may take the cup and say, "This is the new testament in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27; Luke 22:20). True, there may be one hundred, one thousand, or there may be ten thousand, when he says, "Drink ye all of it"; but the only way that drinking ever will be done is when the cup is held to one mouth and that drink goes down one throat.

That is the way salvation is; the way the service of God is. In this connection, on the very night of the Last Supper the Lord Jesus said, "One of you shall betray me" (Matt. 26:21; John 13:21). You will remember the response of the disciples. "Lord, is it I?" (Matt. 26:22). When it was "one of you shall betray me," each person thought that the Lord meant him. But you know on that very same occasion when they were all there, He made this remark, "All of you shall forsake me." You remember the reply? "Not I," Peter said. "Not me. You don't mean me." You see when you say *everybody*, it turns out you mean *nobody*. But when you come down to one person, then right away each person wonders if you mean him.

The first thing that happens between the individual believer and Christ is that Christ Jesus died for his sins. Now I know God created the person, but that would not save him. God in His providence has surrounded him with His grace and mercy, and that would not save him. God may have given him a good

family; God may have arranged it so that he would always be well taken care of and have everything he needed; but that would not save him. There is not anything in the world, under heaven, that can save anyone except Christ Jesus' dying on Calvary's cross. When Christ Jesus died for his sins and carried them away, that individual sinner could accept that truth and belong to God. Christ Jesus took the guilt away for that particular soul.

The basic response to God on the part of any believer is love. You will read in I John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us." It all starts with God. God loved me and gave His Son to die for me. When I believe that to be true and take that into my own life, my response to Him is like His action toward me. He loves me, and because He loves me I respond in love to Him.

The believer is regenerated. He is born again a child of God, as Paul writes: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). Again notice here, "if any man be in Christ" is singular. There is no such phrase as "if any group were in Christ." It is the individual who counts: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." We read further that the Holy Spirit has been given to him. Paul writes to the Galatians: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). So the essential relationship between the Christian and God is that of a son and his father. The Christian, therefore, is first of all a child of God.

We are going to be thinking about the Christian serving: the Christian as God's servant. However, before the Christian has any notion of serving, he is born again as a child of God. The basic truth is that as a child of God this Christian is guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to him of God. The Spirit reveals the will of Christ Jesus and activates the response in the believer to the Living Lord. The inward power of Christian living that causes a Christian to live as he lives, is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Christians are to be together and they are to work together in true unity, because in each believing heart the Living Lord is working. So when each one responds to the working of the Lord within, he will find himself together with the other Christians. Paul wrote of his desire for the Christians in Philippians 1:27, ". . . that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Christians work together in one spirit and with one mind, very much like the fingers of my hand; all are different, yet if my hand is normal, these fingers move as if they were one. They work together in unison. They are all controlled by the one mind. The head is over them all.

So it is with the Christian. Christians work together with an inner cooperation as they are led by the Spirit. This cooperation is made effectual in them by the working of the Holy Spirit, who inclines each one into a personal humility. Thus it is written by the apostle in Philippians: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3, 4).

This is a wonderful message but it is unacceptable to the natural man. The natural man seeks his own way. When he was just a baby he reached, grabbed and held on to everything. This is human nature until a person is born again. When he is born again, he has a new nature; now he is a child of God and in him is the Holy Spirit, who puts into his heart and mind the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ who never did any selfish thing for Himself.

The Holy Spirit activates the life of Christ within the believer. Christians in a group, as they are in a congregation, work together to serve God. They promote the Sunday school, missionary effort, evangelism or prayer meeting. This cooperation between Christians is possible only as the life of Christ is within each one. Because He is one, they can work together as one.

In the book of Philippians, there is an interesting outline of characteristics shown by the individual Christian when he is in a group and is seeking to serve God. The first is noted in chapter 2, and refers to Jesus of Nazareth and his *humility*.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

Note this again: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God" (He was with God before He ever came into this world), "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." That word "robbery" is an awkward translation of the Greek word which means "a thing to be grasped." And of course that is what a robber does. The Son of God did not think it was something to be held on to, to be equal with God. He was equal with God, and was in the presence of God, but He did not hang on to that, "but made himself of no reputation." Other translations say "He emptied himself" ("made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant"). Mark my words, this does not say that Jesus of Nazareth was a servant.

The Scriptures reveal that Christ Jesus has said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). But this does not mean that He is a servant. This was vividly impressed upon me when my father-in-law heard me speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ when I was expressing my personal impression of His willingness to serve. Since the Lord Jesus Himself used the phrase "I am among you as he that serveth," I was inclined to talk of Him as a servant. My father-in-law offered this illustration. He said, "Suppose you went into a bank building late at night. In the lobby you saw a scrubwoman carrying a heavy pail of water and her mop. The door opens and a well dressed man, the president of the bank, greets her. He picks up her pail of water and her mop and walks beside her, talking to her as he goes." My father-in-law said, "Now, don't make the mistake of thinking that man was the scrubwoman. He carried the pail for her, but he was the president of the bank."

Because Jesus of Nazareth came into this world and took upon Him the form of a servant and was found in fashion as a man, do not make the mistake of thinking that He was a servant. You may remember the occasion when the Lord washed the disciples' feet. After He had gone around and had overcome Peter's objection, and had washed all their feet, He said: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13, 14).

This is the point. The most wonderful thing about the work of the Lord Jesus Christ is that He was the Son of God while He was doing it. He was the Son of God that came into this world. He was the Son of God that took upon Him the form of man. And if you think about it, it will increase your understanding of the Virgin Birth. You will know why He was not a child of Adam. He was the Child of God. He came into this world as the Son of God in the form of man. He was subject to all things such as we are. He took upon Him a body that had a nature like our own so that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. But all the time He was the Son of God and He went from there to the cross.

"But made himself of no reputation" (emptied Himself), "and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). In the book of Genesis you read that Adam was made in the likeness of God. That did not make Adam God, because he was made in His likeness. Also, the Son of God was made in the likeness of men, but that does not mean that He was mere man.

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death" (Phil. 2:8). When the time does come in the providence of God that I must pass out of this world, it will not be a case of my humbling myself to die. It is appointed unto man once to die, but not for the Son of God. It was the Son of God who did all of this. It was done with such humility that He humbled Himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross – the death of a criminal. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). It is important to understand that humility is one of the major things that the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated.

Consideration for others is stressed as in the case of Timothy:

"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus (Timothy) shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (Phil. 2:19-22).

Timothy showed consideration for other people's welfare. This is also an important characteristic to be seen in the Christian who is God's servant.

Epaphroditus was a wonderful person. The Scriptures record about him that he was "sick nigh unto death." "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick" (Phil. 2:26). He actually wore himself down in serving others. "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Phil. 2:30). The right word to indicate this is *zeal*. This man, Epaphroditus, was filled with zeal. He put himself into his work and laid himself out for it, until he made himself sick. He worked that hard in seeking to help other people to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, you will see the fourth characteristic brought out in the case of Paul himself in Philippians 3:7-14. Here you will see the *consecration* and total commitment to the Lord to serve Him.

These are four traits found in the servant: humility, consideration for others, zeal for the work in his spirit, and consecration in his life. These things belong in the mind of the servant. This is the case with the Christian in whom the Holy Spirit of God takes the things of the Lord Jesus Christ and brings them to pass within the person himself, to the glory of the Living Lord Jesus Christ. This is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." These are the characteristics in the believer as he seeks to serve God.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the basic attitude of a Christian toward His Lord, since he is a member of the church? (Ephesians 5:23-32)
2. How does the Holy Spirit affect the inner life of a believer? (Ephesians 3:16-19; Romans 5:5)
3. How does the grace of God in his heart prepare a Christian to serve? (II Corinthians 8:9)
4. How did Paul regard Timothy as a Christian? (Philippians 2:19-22; II Timothy 3:15)

Chapter 2

The Work of the Servant

Isaiah 42:1-4; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-4

Can you see how a person would need to humble himself if he ever wanted to serve as a servant of God?

The character of being a servant of God is, perhaps, the most difficult truth to grasp. It is hard for people to realize what would be involved. It is natural to think that if you were a servant of God, you would do what God wanted you to do.

In life a servant is dependent upon his master for direction and reward. Thus it is logical to think if a man were going to serve God, he would do what God wants him to do; and, in return, receive from God what He will give him. The common master-servant relationship may be marked by unfair advantages taken by the master, and the hollow response of the servant with its underlying feelings of hostility. The master may oftentimes be unfair. The servant may oftentimes be untrue. And between the two there may exist continuous ill will.

What then should the servant of God do? In response to this we should notice what Jesus of Nazareth did when He was here, because He was *the* Servant of God. For our first Scripture we turn to Isaiah 42:1-4. This passage is used in the New Testament to describe Jesus of Nazareth. It will teach us what it will be like when we have Christ in us, guiding us as Christians.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:1-4).

Here we see what the servant of God will look like, and what is going to take place in the heart of a Christian, when he can say truly "Christ liveth in me." As we see Christ in action as in this passage in Isaiah, we can see the Christian as he lives and serves.

Let us look at this with care. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold . . . in whom my soul delighteth." The first thing that comes to your mind about this servant of God is that he belongs to God. Though he may act and serve as a servant, he actually is a child of God. The servant of God is dependent upon God for his living, implied in the phrase "whom I uphold"; and for his satisfaction, implied in the phrase "in whom my soul delighteth." There is no such thing as striving to qualify to be good enough to become a servant of God. The believer starts out as His servant. The believer may be just a beginner as a servant but he belongs to God.

Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit will guide the believer, "I have put my spirit upon him." Thus this servant of God has the Holy Spirit within him. The Holy Spirit in the believer activates the servant to do the will of God. The person who is a servant of God is not doing what he or she thinks is good, hoping God will like it. The believer is not doing what he or she thinks is right, hoping God will approve it. No, the servant of God actually is seeking only to be obedient to the inward guidance that he has from the Living God.

"He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Whenever you see the word "Gentile" in the Old Testament, insert "everyone, all people." There was no single class of people called Gentiles. The single class of people in the Old Testament that is specially named are Hebrews, Israelites, Jews. They are the "chosen." Everyone else is a Gentile. Thus the phrase "he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" means He will help all men. The Christian, living as the servant of God, also will have this attitude of helpfulness toward everyone. A human being is a creature of God and could become a child of God;

therefore the Christian is interested in helping that being towards his goal.

"He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." The phrase "lift up" really means to say "he shall not cry nor lift up his voice, nor make it to be heard in the street." In other words, the servant of God will be gentle, mild, and quiet-mannered. This brings to mind the Lord Jesus, gentle but with all-power. In this connection, think of how the sunlight comes in, quietly, but with power. Think of how the law of gravitation operates. It pulls you to the ground without noise or fuss, but with power. Or think of the flow of electricity. You do not hear a rustling sound nor see a bulge moving in the wires, but there is power.

So it is with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not have to impress anyone with what He said. He did not have to shout. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." He maintained a mild-mannered, gentle approach. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." This means to say, that if you would use a reed or stick as a rod until it is cracked and bruised, He will not break it and throw it away as useless. The phrase "the smoking flax" refers to flax that was used for burning to create more heat. If the material used to light a fire is damp or wet it will be difficult to start a flame. Flax straw that is wet will just barely catch fire, and there will be smoke, as the fire smolders when it is not really burning brightly. When the fire burns strongly, there will be little smoke. So, here "smoking flax" means the straw is just barely lit with just a little fire. *However*, He shall not quench that fire, He will not put it out. The believer can take great comfort. This whole statement means to say that when a believer is weak, incapable, faulty, Christ will not throw that person away. If a Christian should start out to serve his Lord today and tomorrow fail – succeeding one day, failing the next – the Lord will not discard him. The bruised reed He will not smash; the smoking flax, the smoldering fire with scarcely a flicker, He will not put out.

"He shall bring forth judgment unto truth": Christ will be honest in dealing with men. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth": He will be persistent. This is one of the wonderful truths learned in the heart when a person really belongs to the Lord. The believer might become discouraged and fail, but the Lord will not. Christ is consistent, persistent: He will not fail "till he have set judgment in the earth." He will be successful.

"And the isles shall wait for his law." The fact is that the servant of God is sent to help all men because God wants to help all nations by revealing truth to them. In order to do that He sends His Beloved Servant, empowering this Servant by His Spirit to help all men. In His unlimited strength, the Servant is mild, patient, honest, persistent and works for everyone. Because he is led by the Spirit of God, the Christian will manifest this character in his own service.

The next portion of Scripture we are privileged to look into is one of the most famous, one of the most wonderful passages in the Bible. This portion begins in Isaiah 52:13 and continues through the whole of chapter 53. This is the classic description of the sufferings of Christ, which He endured for the sinner that he might be saved. This suffering belongs in the nature of the work of a servant. Christ suffered because He came to serve. He came to do this for us, and the principal truth here is that the innocent Substitute must die in the sinner's place.

In Isaiah 52:13 it is written, "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." This predicts that the servant of God will be wise, prudent. "As many were astonished (astonished) at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14). The word "visage" refers to His countenance, His face. This is perhaps the only clue in the Bible as to what the personal appearance of Jesus of Nazareth actually was: His face "was so marred more than any man."

There is no record of what happened in the life of Jesus of Nazareth in the first thirty years He lived. We know about Him as a baby, and in one incident at the Temple when He was twelve years old. We do not have any idea how the other young people treated Him, nor how other people dealt with Him

during the time He was in His 'teens or twenties. None of these things is recorded. We know He was always without sin. This would mean He would always be honest and straightforward. He would never attempt to get anything for Himself. Such a person just naturally would be misunderstood; He would be taken advantage of and undoubtedly buffeted.

The prophet, looking ahead and seeing this Servant of God, remarked, "His face is so badly scarred and marred more than anyone's. His body, His form, more than the sons of men." This would seem to say: He was abused. Yet the prophet next could say: "So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider" (Isa. 52:15). Apparently He would be effective. He would get His message across.

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:1, 2).

It would appear from this description that the Servant had no natural appeal. Whatever a person may think about Jesus of Nazareth, he can be sure there was nothing attractive about Him by human standards. No doubt the artists will try to do justice to the wonderful things of Christ by seeking to show them in His human form, but this picture is in no way revealed in Scripture. No one knows what Jesus of Nazareth looked like, unless it is noted there was nothing exceptional about His appearance. Remember the night He was betrayed? Judas went to betray Him, but he could not – certainly, he did not point out any distinctive characteristic. Jesus of Nazareth was not so tall, so dark, so fair; there was not anything about Him that was noticeable. Remember how Judas identified Him? He said, "Watch me. The man I kiss, that's the man." This observation can help us to keep in mind the servant of God may not be anything exceptional. Actually the servant of God may be a very ordinary looking person and with a very ordinary manner of life.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3).

Apparently when the Servant of God lived in this world, the very people who were closest to Him did not appreciate Him. There was nothing inspiring about His action in the eyes of the people who were around Him. They actually thought that God was neglecting Him. Personally they turned from him in complete rejection.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4).

This records the fact that at the time the Servant was doing His service among men, people failed to understand Him. During the time He was here and during the time He was actually rendering His service, it was true that He suffered because of the people and because He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows, yet the people thought He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. He was misunderstood, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

This Servant was a Living Sacrifice. He came as a Substitute for the sinner and bore our sins. This is the actual truth of the matter. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

In the Old Testament, among the sacrifices, there was one unusual sacrifice. A goat was brought forward and the priest confessed the sins of the people on the goat. The goat was then turned loose into the wilderness. He was called "the scapegoat" because he escaped as it were with the sins of the people upon him. The scapegoat is the one who carried the burden or responsibility for somebody else.

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

This is the classic passage to indicate the meekness of the Son of God. It is meekness of the

Servant "as a lamb to the slaughter." There was no self-defense. This is probably one of the hardest things for a person to learn as a Christian. When the believer has Christ in him and is being led inwardly by the Holy Spirit in his daily walk, whatever it may be, the Christian performs his service large or small as unto the Lord. That person will not always be understood by men. He may have people say things about him and do things to him they should not say or do. Remember, there is to be no defense, no self-justification.

"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. 53:7, 8).

In Isaiah 53:8-9 it is recorded that the Servant actually suffered unto death. "He was cut off out of the land of the living . . . and he made his grave with the wicked. ..because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." The Servant drank the whole cup down to the bitter dregs. This will belong to the experience of the Servant of God.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:10-11).

This is the victory toward which the Servant is working. The Christian must remember the servant is not greater than his Master. Paul wrote to the Philippians: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Phil. 1:29-30).

In Isaiah 61:1-4 is described the gracious ministry of the gospel. To a certain extent there is here the actual result of what happens when the servant is serving God. (The way in which it also is brought about by the Lord Jesus Christ is quoted in the New Testament.) "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek" (Isa. 61:1). The servant is commissioned to preach good tidings, the triumphant victorious message of the grace of God. "He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:1-3). We as the servants of God are Commissioned to preach to the whole World that God is able to save in every way, to the uttermost, those who come unto Him.

In this passage also is shown the fact that believers are saved into service, ". . . that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations" (Isa. 61:3-4). The purpose of this saving Work of Christ Jesus is that when we are set free we are brought into service that we in turn may do the will of God. The great commission "Go ye into all the World, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) is the task that is given to every Christian as he serves God. His great example in service is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the World to seek and to save the lost, and who was among us as He who served us.

Discussion Questions

1. What guidance is in this study for a mother?
2. How did Paul illustrate this truth in his life? (Philippians 3:10)
3. How is suffering involved in spiritual life? (I Peter 4:1)
4. How can a Christian follow in Christ's steps? (I Peter 2:19-25)

Chapter 3

The Temptation of the Servant

Luke 4:1-22

Did you know that a good man can be tempted to disobey God?

The Christian is a disciple of Christ Jesus, a believer in the gospel, and this means that he has received Jesus Christ as Saviour and as Lord. This means that he is forgiven. He is cleansed in the sight of God. He is delivered from his evil ways and born again in Christ Jesus. He has been given the Holy Spirit into his heart to comfort him, to guide him and to show him the things of Christ. One can say about him, "Christ in you, the hope of Glory."

The Christian has denied himself, has yielded in surrender and now lives in Christ; and Christ lives in him. He does not do this in his own strength, nor in his own wisdom, nor by his own virtue. Christ Jesus said when He was here: "I am among you as he that serveth." When Christ is in the heart, there will be from within the person a disposition to serve the Father. The Christian, as a serving person, can be tempted. No one is above being tempted. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was tempted. The temptation of Jesus Christ in the desert is classic. It can be well understood when it is compared with the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In Luke 3:22 it is written: "And a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Now following that account, in chapter 4 we read about the temptation of Jesus of Nazareth in the desert. This temptation originated with the devil, as did the temptation in Eden. "And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4:3).

This is the standard approach of the devil. The devil does not openly contradict God, but he suggests to the mind of the person being tempted that God's commandment need not be taken too seriously. When Satan approached Eve in the garden, he asked her, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). The devil avoided saying, "God didn't say it," as that would have been a contradiction. Eve would have known better. And he did not say that the statement was wrong. He simply raised the question: "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" When Eve answered him she entered into the conversation in which Satan cast doubt upon Eve's understanding about what God had said. Satan cast doubt upon the Word of God then by raising a question, as he does here: "If thou be the Son of God." The voice from Heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Satan now posed a challenge if that is true: "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

The Christian is saved by faith; he lives by faith, and he serves by faith. Faith is vital in his life. Faith is not make-believe. Faith is not a matter of thinking something might be nice, and then believing it to be true and making it come to pass; that is make-believe. No, no! Faith is a matter of hearing what God has said and believing it. It is a matter of receiving the Word of God as true and living in it.

Satan will seek in every way possible to weaken and shake a Christian's faith. If he can get the believer to doubt the Word of God, he is separating the believer from the Word of God, and therefore from his Lord. That leaves the believer on his own, alone. When the believer is alone, he is no match for the devil. Satan can easily take him in then. The fact of Satan poses a puzzle to us. It is a big question in the normal mind: why would God permit Satan? And I can readily say, "I do not know of an answer." That is one of those things God has not revealed to the world.

How can Satan tempt a true believer? He tempted Jesus of Nazareth and he tempted that righteous man in the Old Testament, Job. In each case the devil was under restraint. Satan can only do what God permits him to do.

When one says about Christ Jesus that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without

sin" (Hebrews 4:15), a person should be very careful that he does not think that Christ was tempted by everything that tempts me. It is written, He was tempted in all points like as we are. Yes: but it does not say that He was tempted by everything that tempts me. This depends upon the person. A person who is a refined, gentle person cannot be tempted by vulgar, crass, dirty things. He would be offended by them because they violate his moral standards.

If I might use a personal illustration, I could say in all honesty that in all my days from the time I was a young lad and long before I was a Christian, I could never have been tempted by a bottle of whiskey. All my life I have had a rigid, fixed aversion to any alcoholic liquor. I could never have been tempted by gambling. That always seemed to me an absurd thing: to risk something you could not afford to lose on chance. These are places where I was never in any danger of being tempted. Now this does not mean that I was above temptation, nor does it mean that I was righteous in everything. But it does illustrate that a person who is a refined, cultured individual could not be tempted by something that was outwardly crass, crude, vulgar or obscene. Here is a danger as far as the Christian's understanding is concerned.

A good man can be tempted by a good thing. Jesus of Nazareth could not be tempted by anything unclean in itself because there was in Him no sin. How then could He be tempted? He could be tempted to act in His own will. The story of this temptation is seen in Luke 4:1-11. The reader will see Christ was tempted when He was hungry, to turn the stone into bread. There is nothing wrong about bread. When He was shown all the kingdoms in the world in a moment of time, and told that He could become Lord over all those things, there was nothing wrong about that. In fact He was going to become Lord. What was wrong was the way it was suggested that it be done. One could say, comparatively, eating an apple is not wrong, but when I take your apple, which does not belong to me and eat it, then I am stealing. That is wrong!

There are actions on the part of man that are hurtful in themselves, and are directly contrary to the Ten Commandments. The form of any temptation will depend on the personal character and training of the individual being tempted. This is important. You may feel: "I do not see anything wrong in that." But is that what God wants you to do?

Look again at the record: "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1).

This is a very sobering idea. This temptation was in the will of God, so far as His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, was concerned. The Spirit of God led the Lord Jesus Himself into the desert where this temptation was to come. ". . . Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4:2-3). Again there is nothing wrong in eating bread. His hunger was an honest feeling.

"And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4).

This brings to mind man has two aspects in his personality. He has a bodily aspect that we commonly call the flesh and it needs food; and he has a soul, a spiritual aspect and it needs the Word of God to be fed. Christ Jesus' answer assures the believer that there is more than food for the flesh. He was hungry, yes; but the soul was more important.

In Mark 8:36-37 the Lord Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If the needs of the body come to mind and the needs of the soul come to mind, the needs of the soul must come first. They have priority. The priority is obedience to God.

"And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me,

all shall be thine" (Luke 4:5-7).

Jesus of Nazareth came into this world to be incarnate, the Son of God. His destiny is to be the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He is to rule over all God's creation. This is in the will of God for Him. This promise was before Him. When Satan tempted Him, he asked the Lord to accept a short cut. Christ Jesus answered him: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). Christ Jesus sought the priority of the will of His Father.

"And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Luke 4:9-11).

Satan now goes to Scripture and asks, "Show us now that you are the Son of God. Here is a promise of Scripture. God said He would give His angels charge over thee." This Old Testament quotation was in many respects the most subtle temptation. "And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season" (Luke 4:12-13). Not for always, while He was here in this world He would be tempted again. Notice that each temptation in itself was not evil. Had it been evil He could not have been tempted. He was without sin.

Notice again the course of temptation. First, the Word of God is challenged. That is the way it was with Eve. "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?" Of course, God had said it. Satan put the question to Eve, causing her to doubt. Jesus of Nazareth had been told by a voice from Heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Satan comes and says, "*If* you are the Son of God, then do like this."

The second thing is the lust of the flesh. This is clearly outlined in I John 2:16 where you will see these three things: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The lust of the flesh is shown when Jesus is told to make that stone into bread because it would feed Him. The lust of the flesh would mean the desires of the human nature. The desires of the physical nature for whose fulfillment one could say, "It would feel good." In this case, bread would be good to eat when one was hungry.

The next temptation came when He was taken and shown all the kingdoms of the earth. This is the lust of the eyes in which one sees all things available. It would look good.

Finally, there is the pride of life, when Satan said, "Now if you are the Son of God, prove it." He took Christ up to the top of a high pinnacle and said, "Throw yourself down. Demonstrate that God is really yours." What starts as a normal ambition to try to do things, to accomplish something, can develop into vanity.

Appetite, imagination and vanity: these three things, John says in his First Epistle, are of the world. This is the essence of worldliness. Any believer can be challenged by something that would feel good; something that would look good; something that would set him up. Paul urged believers, when writing to the Ephesians, to "put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). When Satan comes to tempt by making a suggestion, he is not going to come openly saying you are wrong. He will be subtle, asking, "Wouldn't it be a good thing to do this or that?" In each case he will be appealing to some inward inclination to do something on your own. If Satan can get the person to act on his own initiative instead of seeking God's will, then Satan will have accomplished his purpose.

In temptation, there is a safety device: "It is written." It will be very important for the believer (you) to know the mind of the Lord. It will be very important for you to know the Scriptures. You will need to know the Scriptures so that you can know what is the will of God for you. It is for this reason we have Bible study. In avoiding temptation, think on the things of the Scripture, get the Bible into your mind. Then the Holy Spirit can show you the will of God.

Another important thing for the Christian as God's servant is to deny the flesh. In our human nature we can be misled. Let us not be fooled into thinking that the only evil things are things that look wrong; that the only way in which we could be tempted to do evil would be something crude, vulgar, or obscene. The danger is that anything that would appeal may not be in the will of God. The Christian will keep in mind to reckon himself dead: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). In this way, the Christian can be helped to serve God, avoiding temptation. "It is written" remains always the safety device for the Christian soul.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is criticism of the Scriptures so dangerous?
2. Name some situations in which a Christian could be tempted into disobedience by a "good" thing.
3. How would praying help the Christian to avoid falling into temptation?
4. Compare and contrast the temptation in the Garden of Eden and the temptation of Christ in the desert.

Chapter 4

The Acceptable Servant

Luke 18:9-14

Can you understand why the primary need in being a good servant is humility?

Continuing our study of the Christian, God's servant, let us look at the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

In this parable told by Jesus of Nazareth, we are given a clue as to what would make a man acceptable to God. Dr. R. A. Torrey preached on this parable and he used one of the longest sermon titles that I had ever seen: "How a Bad Man went to Heaven and a Good Man went to Hell." First was the Pharisee: famous for diligent personal effort to win God's favor; then the publican: a man notorious for ungodliness, a known sinner. Each man sought the favor of God. Our interest is to note which one was acceptable to God. Both came to worship God. We shall notice their personal attitude.

The Scripture tells us why Jesus of Nazareth used this parable. He "spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." The account seems to indicate that the Pharisee looked upon public worship as routine. In his worship there was no special awareness of God Himself as a Person. Evidently this Pharisee regularly worshiped God in public. He went through the exercises. It is written in Matthew 6:5 ". . . for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." This should speak to anyone who is inclined to let his church attendance become routine; or to feel righteous because he regularly goes to church twice on Sunday.

When the Pharisee came into the Temple "he prayed thus with himself." What a revealing statement that is! He apparently was not conscious of God. How careful a person should be when he leads in prayer, to be very conscious of God and not of himself and the people. This is a common snare in all public religious services. It is so easy for a person to think that when he goes to church, prays and sings a hymn that he has done something special. Such activity does not impress God. God looks on the heart. What did the worshiper mean? How did he feel?

We could use the phrase "sanctimonious" for a kind of religiosity that some people have. They put on such pretense. Listen to the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." Notice how he picked out all the ugly things. It is such an easy thing to bring to mind the sins of other people, and then feel self-righteous. "I'm not like that. Some people get drunk, I don't get drunk. Some people gamble away their salaries, I don't gamble. Some people carouse around all night long, I don't do that kind of thing."

But that is not the only kind of sin. While it is sinful for a man to abuse his body by using alcohol or by stimulating it with drugs, there are those in church who will be well dressed, acceptable, courteous, suave or, as in the case of a lady, refined, even perfumed – but proud as the devil. This would be just as offensive to God. To be proud of my preaching, or to think I am doing something big because I lead in public prayer, could be as offensive to God as some poor sinner that can't help himself and is drunk lying

on the side of the street. God looks on the heart.

The Pharisee was full of himself. He was in the Temple, standing there before God, yet he preened himself and thought how good he was. He had confidence in himself. He was quite sure everything would be all right and he was satisfied with himself. He was smug. He was proud. He was proud of his record; proud of himself; proud of his habitual practices. Deep down in his heart he felt he was so far ahead of other people that he was glad and did not want to be like these other people. This man was unacceptable to God. The publican normally would be known as a worldly, sinful person. Men who are sinners find their way into the church with the hope that they may get to meet God in His mercy. They need help. They do not find this help anywhere else. They have heard of Christ Jesus and they hope that a bit of the mercy and compassion of God would rub off on them. This publican came, standing afar off, feeling unworthy. He is the fellow who sits in the back row of the sanctuary. When I was pastor I came to have a great sympathy for those back-row sitters. It never bothered me that people sat back there. If they would just get inside that door, just come in and sit down, I could tell them something about the Lord. It is when people know the Lord that they come up to the front. It is when they know the Lord that they cannot get close enough. They want to know more of His mercy and His marvelous grace. The publican apparently didn't know God and he was standing afar off.

The publican showed the very attitude of awe. Deep down in his soul he bowed down before God. He makes you think of the occasion when Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord in the Temple. Isaiah saw the seraphim with six wings around the throne. With twain they covered their faces, their eyes; and with twain they covered their feet; and with twain they did fly. They covered their eyes for they were not good enough to look on His holiness. They covered their feet because they did not do well enough to warrant being in His presence. With two wings they did fly to serve Him. This man comes into the presence of God, bows his head, would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, conscious of God. He would hold his breath before God in His greatness, in His wonder, His almighty power. What a wonderful example to any person as he comes into God's presence! One should have a feeling of reverence, awe, unworthiness. One should quiet himself down and pause before Him reverently.

There are some people who, in almost childish fashion, seem to imply today that if one could be boisterous in the presence of God everything would be fine. That might do for little babies and children. But one can never be satisfied with that as a proper attitude. The publican showed reverence. He stood afar off and, because of the humility in him, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven. Remember Isaiah! "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). This is humility. His self-esteem reminds one of Job: "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself . . . in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). The publican smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He was conscious of God. He was conscious of his own weakness: aware of his own sinfulness.

The publican came in repentance. We can rejoice and thank Almighty God that the repentant soul is welcome. A humble and a contrite heart He will not despise. Any servant who wants to be acceptable in the presence of God must start right here. There must be a deep down, honest, sincere, actual repentance because of one's self. The publican knew he was not fit. This man was honest.

Consider the case of the prodigal. The prodigal had gone away from home, and had spent all. He had lived a wanton worldly life and had lost everything. He came finally to himself and realized what had happened. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:18, 19). It would be well to remember those words as the way to enter into the presence of God. One should come saying, "I have sinned . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The greatest qualification one could ever have to serve God is to know that one is not fit – no self-defense, no explanation, no alibis, no excuses, no promises to do better – just a

humble, honest, repentant confession, "I am not worthy." The Lord Jesus said, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Do not miss this. It has been very clearly put in this parable.

The Lord had one further word: "For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Here is a plain statement of something that really and truly works both ways, and it should be taken to heart. The moment the person gets the idea that he is better than anyone else, that he has got it made, he can expect to be humbled. Just as surely as there is a God in heaven, you can be sure, He resisteth the proud but He giveth grace to the humble.

Now look at the other side of this statement. What a marvelous statement is made. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," so the Christian is encouraged to do this in every way. If he is invited to a feast, he is urged to take the lowest seat. He is to avoid going up to the front. They might ask him to step back. He is to go down to the bottom and they may help him up. In every way, the approach to Almighty God is to humbly confess personal unworthiness.

One may be reminded of the occasion when the disciples had been sent out in the name of Jesus of Nazareth to teach the people in the villages. They were given power to cast out demons and to heal the sick. They came back from their exercises with joy and they told the Lord "Even the very demons were subject to us" (Luke 10:17). They were rejoicing in what had been possible. The Lord Jesus told them, "Nevertheless in this rejoice not, but that your name were written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). In other words, even when we are successful in our work, we must be very careful to remember that it is not we that have done it, but God. We should give God the credit and glory.

Christians as servants are but messengers. The telegraph boy brings the message, but he did not write the message. He had no authority to do that. The only authority he had was to deliver that message to the person to whom it was sent. And that is the way it is with us when we serve God. The Lord Jesus could say that He as the Son of man could do nothing of Himself. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5:17).

Christians need to be so alert and so careful lest they fall into the snare that is pictured here in this parable: To think that in some way the credit belongs to them. No! Let us beware. If any good comes from anything we do, it is God that does it. Gamaliel, that wise teacher of the Jews, said long ago, "If this thing be of men, it will come to nothing, but if it be of God you cannot overthrow it." One should never forget that everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Christians seeking to serve the Lord need to be alert and careful lest they fall into the Pharisee's role. May God help us each one.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Jesus of Nazareth caution His disciples in Luke 10:17-20?
2. Why is this message specially important to those active in organized church work?
3. Give several examples to show how power in prayer could be hindered among good people.
4. List scriptural comments by Paul that show his humility.

Chapter 5

The Obedient Servant

Jonah 1-4

Can you see how disobedience in a Christian actually would be the result of selfishness?

Our interest in this series of studies is in the Christian as God's servant. To be a servant, one must be given a task to perform by someone else. It is not something that one figures out for oneself and then goes out to do. It is a natural response when given a task, to ask, "Do I want to do it?" This is usually expressed in the form of a very simple question. "Why?" How many times it is true when someone is asked to do something, the response is "Why?" which implies "If I think it is good or if I want to be associated with it; perhaps I will do it." This question "Why?" is grounded in the attitude: "I will do only what I wish to do." The person who asks "Why?" may not be conscious of being self-centered, but that is actually the reality. "Why should *I* do it?" "What will *I* get out of it?"

In a person's human nature he is, in his heart, committed to what he prefers. All such feeling is natural enough, but it is sinful. It is not the way the Lord Jesus Christ did. He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing . . . because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). This was the mind of Christ, and it is the mind that will be in the heart of the Christian because of the Holy Spirit in him.

It is not so much that a person hears the will of God, the plan of God, and then decides to do it. Rather, one yields himself to do the will of God, and then listens to see what it will be. It is an attitude that would look up to God and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Some of us know that song: "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord. I'll do what you want me to do. I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord. I'll be what you want me to be."

An example of the obedient servant is found in the short Old Testament book of Jonah. It has four brief chapters that are easily read. The story is very simple, but very profound. In studying the story of Jonah to learn what is meaningful for the Christian as God's servant, we will look for three things. First, what was the servant given to do? He was given a task, a commission. He was to go to Nineveh and deliver a message. There is no mention of Jonah's personal fitness for the task. God knew of course what Jonah could do, but God could make him fit for anything. When Moses was given his task, Moses said to God, "I am not able. I can't talk. I can't speak." God rebuked him, saying, "Who made your mouth? Who made you? I'm the Person that made you and I'm the Person that is commissioning you. I want you to do this thing."

We are not given any clue as to why Jonah was chosen, nor are we told anything about the nature of the task. We are simply told that there was a wicked, ungodly city; there was a man, Jonah; and God was concerned about that city. Jonah was told to go to that city and deliver God's message. Jonah chose to go in the opposite direction, and was stopped in his flight away from the will of God. He admitted that he was turning his back on God's will, and was thrown overboard by the sailors. The fish swallowed him, and in the belly of the fish on the brink of death, Jonah prayed and was heard. These facts are simple and clear.

One of the most wonderful things a reader will ever get from this whole book is that when Jonah was totally, utterly helpless he prayed, and then God heard him. Oh, if Christians could but learn this. We are so prone to wonder is there any part we can do? If there is, we are going to wiggle and squirm and strain and try to do it. As long as we do it our way, we are delaying the blessing of God.

When Jonah was finally put back out on the shore, and God gave him his task a second time, Jonah was now willing to do whatever God wanted him to do. It was the original task. The city of Nineveh was still there. Jonah went and preached. The people were so affected by the message they turned to God. God changed His plan and spared the city. Jonah was unhappy because God's action did not seem

consistent. But then he was shown an object lesson of God's mercy and grace. God did not punish Jonah for his criticism of God's action. He patiently showed Jonah that God's way was right. The point at issue in the story is not Jonah. The real lesson is in recognizing God's way of doing things. He is the Lord. He rules and overrules. As we observe what Jonah had to do we note what any servant of God has to do. He has to trust God and obey Him. Jonah was given a task and was disobedient. He refused to accept God's will because he had a will of his own. Jonah judged God's plan to be undesirable. When God told Jonah what he should do, Jonah considered and said in effect, "Oh, no, that is not what I want to do." Later when God spared the people, Jonah judged God. In all of Jonah's conduct there is a dominant note of selfishness. The amazing revelation is God's patient treatment of His unwilling servant, and God's gracious treatment of the repentant sinners of Nineveh. How comforting it is to know that God's attitude toward ourselves and others is not determined by our human whims.

Any Christian, as a servant, would do well to remember how naturally a human being has his own natural interests and desires. Only as these are overcome by yielding to the Spirit of God is the Christian able to be obedient. He can never be obedient in himself. The natural man, like Jonah, has his own ideas. He feels he is free to disobey. In this he is mistaken. Jonah needed to learn that he was not free from God's control. God gives the Christian an opportunity to serve Him, but the Christian is not free to do otherwise.

When Jonah decided to act on his own, he evidently did not expect trouble. He had to learn that God would invoke suffering if need be. God would bring tribulation if it would take that to bring His servant into line. The New Testament makes it clear that those "whom He loveth, He chasteneth," and He "will scourge every son whom He receiveth." It is revealed in Scripture that God will bring tribulation and suffering to His people in order to lead them in the way that He wants them to go. No wonder the apostle Paul, who was a great servant of God, could say that he gloried in tribulation. This was not because he liked to suffer, but because "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 5:3-5).

Jonah had to learn that God will invoke suffering if need be. Jonah also learned that God will forgive the repentant soul. What a wonderful thing for any servant to realize! It makes no difference what a person has done. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is the promise of God.

When God changed His announced course because the people repented, Jonah judged God's action as inconsistent. He resented God's mercy. The Christian can appreciate the patience and long-suffering of God when he sees that God did not judge nor punish Jonah for this. God showed Jonah something he needed to learn in the forgiveness of the people of Nineveh – God is not bound. He is almighty. God is always free because He is sovereign and if He wants to forgive, He can forgive. If He wants to suspend His course of action, He can do that. There is not any timetable to schedule God's action. Anyone studying Scripture who feels led to estimate times and seasons when God will act is out of bounds. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons" (Acts 1:7). God is not bound by them. If God needs more time He can make it. Time is His creation. God is always free. He is sovereign.

Another marvelous truth about God is that He is compassionate. Jonah needed to learn this and he had to learn it the hard way. But Jonah believed in God, and he was enabled to learn the truth so that he could serve God.

We can learn from Jonah that God wants His message taken even to the wicked. The message may not be pleasant. He wants them to be told that they are in danger of His judgment and destruction. God is not mocked. No one is going to make a fool out of Him. People may resist Him, neglect Him, and turn their backs on Him, but God will judge them and work His will. He will destroy. This is what they need to know. The servant may need to bring them that message.

Every now and again people feel that a preacher should be careful not to say unpleasant things. But any true servant of God cannot fear man. God calls believers to obey Him. And so the Christian, as God's

servant, will be given his task. As an obedient servant he is to do it. The servant can be disobedient; and if he is disobedient he will be chastised. The chastisement may be so severe that it seems to bring the servant even unto death. But the Christian can repent. When a Christian will repent, he has a wonderful experience awaiting him. God will receive him and will cleanse him, forgive him, deliver him and use him. When Jonah cried out to God, God arranged for Jonah to be spewed out on the land. Jonah was put out on the shore by the very same fish that had swallowed him. The repentant soul will be received graciously. The believing prayer will be heard. If a man repents honestly before God, he can ask God for deliverance and God will hear him.

When you think of what follows, you realize the wonderful part of the story. Jonah had started out so disobediently, but is now chastised and humbled. He repents and turns to God. God again gives him his assignment. The ministry of Jonah, the service of Jonah, actually turned out to be effectual.

God can use anyone who obeys Him, regardless of that person's past record. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7). This is the truth shown in the story of Jonah.

The Christian as God's servant should remember God is long-suffering; He is meek and He is patient even in dealing with His servants. Christians have a responsibility. They are to let their light shine so that men may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in Heaven.

A Christian at a busy corner seeing a blind man waiting to cross the street can help. If a Christian should happen to be in a community where an epidemic breaks out; and the believer knows where the vaccine is; where a doctor is; then he is responsible to bring help to the sick. A believer would not think for one moment of leaving a child drowning in a canal if he could help. No Christian is free to ignore the cry for help. God may want His servant, the Christian, to take a saving message to wicked people who do not believe in God. That servant may be unreliable. He may say he won't go, and afterwards go. He may start out to go, and then not go. But God does not change His purpose, and we learn so far as this is concerned that the one thing the servant is to do is to obey God. What did God ask? That the Christian should do, and trust in Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What is lacking in the confidence of a professing Christian who disobeys God?
2. What evidence can you see that Jonah was a real believer in God?
3. Explain what is involved in the saying, "to obey is better than sacrifice"?
4. What can be learned about the source of power in the testimony of a servant of God in the career of Jonah?

Chapter 6

The Servant's Evangelism

I Corinthians 1:10-31; 2:1-5

Do you know why preaching the cross causes so many objections among Christian people?

The Christian is God's servant in telling all men that God sent His Son into the world to seek and to save the lost. God did not give this mission to angels. This mission is being done by believing, trusting Christian people. The message is not the Christian's own message, because the Christian did not conceive the plan of salvation. As this involves the soul, this is something that God does. God calls the believer to serve Him.

When the Christian is considered as God's servant, the whole matter of his task is taken out of his hands. God originated it, designed it and gave it to him that he should do it. The gospel has power because it is God's Word. The promise in it is true because God will perform His work as it is promised to any who will believe. The Christian is called by the will of God. He is commissioned by the Lord, guided by the Holy Spirit, given the message to proclaim and the results will be what God will do.

In I Corinthians 1:10-31 we see how the apostle Paul carried out his task of effective evangelism. We read: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." Christians should be careful to avoid leaving the impression on the world outside that they are presenting conflicting or differing views or versions of the gospel. This can be done if the message is kept simple and true to the Bible. The first chapter of Galatians makes it clear that the apostle Paul did not endorse everyone who was preaching to the Christians and claiming to preach the gospel. As a matter of fact the apostle Paul distinctly made it a point to say that if anyone preached anything different from what he was preaching, that person should be accursed. The apostle knew that what he was preaching was the truth. Again, preaching must be true to Scripture and plain enough to be clearly understood.

The apostle Paul goes on to say: "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:11-13).

The apostle is emphasizing that preeminence should be given to Christ Jesus rather than any allegiance to any popular minister. This is very very important. Even among earnest Christians divisions arise as one follows one or another preacher or teacher. The apostle Paul would frown upon all that. He would say that is leaving a wrong impression on the world outside. It is when people start elaborating, explaining away, that differences begin to appear. It will be better in evangelism if the message is kept simple and scriptural.

Paul continues: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Cor. 1:14-17).

Here is a truth so often overlooked today. Paul is pointing out that when a person is preaching the gospel, emphasis should not be upon the outward response of the hearers, but upon the inward work of Christ in the heart. Take the example of a person being baptized. When the hearer openly professes faith, comes forward and takes his stand with the Christians, then he will be baptized. Who is the center of attention? The convert. Paul would say, "Not that way. Look at Christ. Have them look at the Lord."

The important thing in evangelism is not adding members to the church, it is bringing the power of Christ into the heart. It is seeing the effect of the truth of the gospel in the hearts of men. Open profession

of a believer's faith is vital and valuable. However, evangelistic activity that specializes on this and leaves the emphasis there is inadequate. Evangelism is not aiming at the outward response of the hearers, but at the inward work of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul made it very plain when he said, "Christ sent me not to baptize." The evangelist's work in the community is not primarily to bring some individual to an open profession, and then endorse him before the world as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is all well in its place but it comes second place. In the first place it is that the truth of the gospel should come into the hearts of men.

Paul says in the latter part of verse 17, ". . . not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Here is a common snare for all preachers and all witnesses. The message itself should be a simple report of how Christ Jesus died for our sins on Calvary; how He was raised again into newness of power by the might of God in order to make it possible that any sinner could die with Him in faith and be raised with Him into the newness of life. This is the important thing. There are other ideas, and they will enrich, and they will enhance, and they will increase, but they should not be allowed to blur this simple picture.

The apostle continues in I Corinthians 2:1-5: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom (I didn't use careful language, I didn't use oratory and I didn't use philosophy), declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you (that is not to respect, not to esteem as highly important anything among you), save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Why? because Paul knew that if he talked simply that way, he would be accused of being ignorant. He would be accused of not knowing any better. But this is what he did. And he tells you why. "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The believer's faith is a personal acceptance of the power of God that can raise the dead. This is what evangelism should be doing. Intellectual explanation of the gospel has no power to save.

It is the preaching of the cross that is important. The apostle explains: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:18-21).

When Paul says the foolishness of preaching, he means the foolishness of preaching the events of the death, the resurrection and the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. This kind of preaching, that some people ("them that perish") would count foolish, will save the soul.

The preaching of the cross is so important. Why is it so significant that Christ Jesus died on Calvary in order that He should be raised from the dead? Because in Christ Jesus dying on Calvary and being raised from the dead, the way is open for any believer to enter into newness of life. The first thing that happens in entering into the newness of life is that the person must die to self and take up his cross. Jesus said, "whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

The preaching of the cross is not only preaching the historic fact of Christ on Calvary; it is also the preaching of the principle that the individual needs to deny himself unto death and receive Christ Jesus as his Substitute in himself that Christ may live in him. To many people this is just a matter of words; and as long as it is that, they will never know the power. They will never know what is meant by being saved. This is why Paul is emphasizing it this way. The preaching of the cross is the heart of the gospel message.

When Christ Jesus went to the cross of Calvary, He did not stay there. He was taken down and put into the grave, but He did not stay there. In three days He was raised from the dead. The believer cannot

be raised from the dead unless he shares in what it is to die. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has the power to save the soul. It leads the individual into death that he might be raised into the newness of life.

We need to remember that involved intellectual argument has no power to save the soul. The Christian is commissioned only to preach the meaning of what Christ Jesus did when He died for us. Evangelism does not deal primarily with a man's head, it deals rather with a man's heart. The important thing is not what the believer can explain, but what he knows to be true about Jesus Christ as he yields to Him.

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:23, 24). This is a remarkable statement. It sounds as if Paul were repeating himself. Self-denial unto the death of self, that the soul might be saved by God, is the cardinal theme of the gospel. Christians preach Christ crucified, buried and raised from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, is now interceding for them, and He is coming again. All of that is included here.

Such preaching will not be acceptable to the "religious." Where Paul uses the word "Jew" one thinks of religious people. People that go to church, people who attend meetings and are busy with the programs and activities. It is often not acceptable to them to be told that they must be born again. When a person is actually born again others will know it. This will not be acceptable to the religious, the "Jew," nor to the intellectual, the "Greek," but it will be effectual for both Jews and Greeks or anyone else who believes.

Then Paul continues: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29).

The apostle is calling them to take notice of themselves. Among the people who respond to the gospel are many poor, many uneducated. The preacher should tell them simply that Christ Jesus died for them. This will permit them to yield to God and bring them into glorious spiritual experiences so that they may become strong in faith. These who believe do not have a long list of explanations even from Scripture. They just know that Christ Jesus died for them, they put their trust in Him, and they have the joy of His fellowship. This, no one can take away from them.

This truth was demonstrated in the case of the man that was born blind (John 9:24, 25). When the Pharisees told him, "Now the man who helped you, the person that opened your eyes, was a bad man. He did this on the Sabbath Day and that is not good." The healed man answered, "Whether he be a good man or not, I know not. One thing I know, once I was blind and now I see." And this remains forever the simple, final, complete testimony of a soul that has been saved by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. There is no argument for that. It is like saying to a person who has tested water in a pan, "Is the water in that pan hot?" He answers, "Yes." "How do you know?" He cries, "I put my finger in – I know!"

This is just the way it is with Christians. The response is to the gospel as it is, preached in its simple strength. The evangelist should tell the Word of God just as it is in the Bible: that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost; that He called men to Himself; that whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out; that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Any person who simply and humbly believes it will be saved, and his soul will be filled with joy. The response to the gospel, when it is preached in its simple strength, can be seen in the changed lives of the people.

Also in this there is no special privilege for men who have superior personal ability. There is no special prominence given to any man just because he happens to be smart or rich, strong or famous. None

of these things matter. The only thing that matters is that the person believes in Jesus Christ, accepts Him as his personal Saviour and trusts totally in Him.

It is this kind of evangelism that gives meaning to the last two verses in the chapter. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). Those are big words, but they are all true in Christ Jesus. It does not matter if the person understands their meaning, they belong to the believer just the same. If a person is in Christ Jesus, these words will be for him. It has been said in recent years "Christ is the answer." Paul would say *Christ Jesus is the sufficient answer to every human need*. "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor.1:31).

Discussion Questions

1. What is the gospel? (I Corinthians 15:1-8)
2. Why is it necessary that the gospel be preached? (Romans 10:13-17)
3. What is the Great Commission? (Matthew 28:18-20)
4. What is included in effectual evangelism? (I Thessalonians 1:5-2:12)

Chapter 7

The Servant's Manner of Life

John 13:1-20

Did you realize that a Christian's attitude toward other Christians affects his service?

How can a Christian's service be useful and fruitful? A Christian's manner of life among people is an actual part of his witness as a servant. It makes a difference how a believer lives. Christians in their witness not only *tell* what is in the gospel, they *demonstrate* it in their own living. As a servant, the way the Christian acts often teaches more than his words.

This whole truth was demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth in John 13:1-20. "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself" (John 13:1-4).

We see the beginning of the servant's conduct here. In this study we shall be noting the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is to be remembered that He said, "I am among you as he that serveth." Thus it is as we watch Him that we learn what a servant will do.

The servant acts when the time is ripe, therefore he must be ready. This means that he is always ready to act. The servant is prepared in his heart and spirit to act according to the will of God. The servant is under control, does not act impulsively but waits for guidance. "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end," (v. 1). He was ready to help His own, those who were entrusted to Him, despite the tension. As it was close to the end of His ministry here on earth, Jesus of Nazareth waited for the time to come. He waited for the right moment. "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him" (v. 2).

Here we see two conditions. "Supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot ...to betray Him" was an unseen spiritual condition. But it was known to the Lord, and the time was right. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands¹ and that he was come from God, and went to God" (v. 3). The Servant acts, aware of His relation to God. And so it is with the Christian.

At this point it may seem easier to preach or teach or witness in the name of the Lord in a church than it would be to speak a word at home or at the office. It is harder to see that one is witnessing for Christ when it is a matter of being honest in business when the competitor is not honest. But the Christian does things because he belongs to God.

The second condition was also invisible to other persons. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God" was a spiritual situation that He understood. When these two conditions were realized, this Servant acted. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments" (v. 4). He takes the initiative. He is going to do something: He made preparation for His actions. It is written, " And took a towel, and girded himself" (v. 4). We know what He is going to do, He is going to wash and dry the disciples' feet. So He prepared for this.

It will be helpful to remember that washing the feet of your guest was a normal procedure in that day and time. It was a good deal like serving a person a glass of cold water when he comes to visit. This would be a gesture of politeness and of consideration and graciousness on the part of the host. In those days people wore sandals and walked on dusty roads. Naturally their feet would get dusty, and on a hot day this would be quite uncomfortable. One can understand how cooling it would be when a guest comes into someone's home and a servant would come with a basin of water and would rinse the feet and with a

towel dry them. This was what was done by Jesus of Nazareth.

What really bothered the disciples was that He, the Lord and Master, would do the servant's task. Peter objected to what was done because he could not accept it. The Lord explained the importance of this act to him. Here the Servant is faithful to instruct the one who objects to His service. The Lord did not scold Peter. Peter was going to have to let this happen from Jesus of Nazareth as an example.

In verse 11 we read: "For he knew who should betray him." Even though the Servant knew His tragic fate, even though Jesus of Nazareth knew that He was going to be betrayed, He continued and did not falter in His particular ministry. He knew all things were in God's hands. He did not need to take any steps to overcome anything. He obeyed His Father. He carried on just the way God wanted Him to, and in that He set an example for the servant. A servant may know that the particular conduct he is following will lead him into embarrassing situations, and may actually expose him to being mistreated. He may know that this conduct will be misunderstood. He may know that it will set him up to receive abuse from some people, but if it is the thing that he should do, he will go ahead and do it, regardless. The servant leaves the ultimate outcome in the Master's hands. Christ Jesus was not afraid that things would get out of control. God was in charge.

The servant is shown that his conduct should be patterned after the manner of His Lord. The Christian is shown that the way he is to live is the way in which Jesus of Nazareth lived while He was here upon earth. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:13-15). The servant of Christ must recognize that Jesus is his Master and Lord, even though He acted as a servant. He set an example. This He pointed out very plainly. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (v. 15). It is not so much of vital importance what the specific deed may be. It is not what he does that makes a Christian.

The Christian as a servant is to maintain a spiritual attitude in godly conduct. For example, a Christian is to show humility. Humility cannot be grasped, measured or weighed. One cannot bottle it and sprinkle it as needed. Humility is a quality of conduct. As a citizen being humble, a man will have respect for the law of the land. That takes humility. There is not someone there to watch him all the time. As a Christian and so a good citizen in the community, a person will respect the speed laws and be careful in traffic situations.

What would humility as a neighbor be like? A person would try to live peaceably with all men, giving none offense. Perhaps a person might like to keep chickens in his backyard. However in keeping chickens he would be offending someone. This he will not do. A Christian will not insist on anything that will cause someone else to feel badly. In this he is showing humility.

How would one show humility as a husband? It would be shown by being considerate of his wife, making it easier for her to perform her work. If she made some unreasonable demands of him, he would go ahead and get it done. He could have complained but he was humble. This is the way humility would show.

Similarly the wife can show humility. Perhaps the husband is loud in his speech and even harsh in his attitude. She is patient, taking no offense. She helps him because she is humble. Thus each would "esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

Consider the case of a parent. When one is a parent practical problems arise. The parent has to direct the child, has to correct the child, has to pick up after the child, has to show the child what to do. This is altogether a demanding experience. For this a parent must be faithful. This can be done if the parent is humble. The parent takes no offense. He "suffereth long, and is kind" (I Cor. 13:4).

Think of a Christian child who wants to show humility. He would show it by being obedient. Parents are not always right. But the child will be as obedient as he can be.

To be a witness for Christ at home or in the community the person would be gracious. The

believer's speech will be gentle. He will be kind and tenderhearted. Others will actually see and feel the humility that belongs to a person who is a Christian. This is done for His name's sake.

Being a Christian does not mean that this is the reason a person pays his debts. A person pays his debts because it is honest. He will pay them promptly and humbly. The Christian will do these things in a way which allows the other person elbow room for his feelings. He will show consideration of others in his own actions.

How can a Christian show charity? Charity like humility is a quality of conduct. It is only seen in behavior. A Christian exercises himself for those who are poor or in some way disadvantaged. This again is done for Christ's name's sake.

While teaching in seminary I often asked the students, "What would be the signs of an apostle?" Usually they would have in mind a great preacher, one who had a powerful argument. Paul would have qualified if anyone could. But Paul said, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (II Cor. 12:12). Patience is the most important thing in a witness for Christ. There are other people who cannot help themselves. One does not blame the blind man for being blind nor the lame man for limping. As the Christian has the Spirit of Christ in his heart and is kind to people, and is thoughtful to people, he is showing the Christian manner of life. The Christian as a servant seeks to honor his Lord. As the apostle Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, yet nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." This is how it happens when Christ lives in the Christian. When the Christian is a servant, this becomes his manner of life.

Discussion Questions

1. What can a Christian learn from the fact that Jesus of Nazareth knew Judas would betray Him, but said nothing to expose him?
2. How does Peter's objection to letting Jesus of Nazareth wash his feet reveal the pride in his heart?
3. How would the fact he needed washing promote Peter's humility?
4. What is the difference in saying (1) Jesus of Nazareth was a servant and (2) Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God who acted like a servant?

Chapter 8

The Servant's Service

Romans 12:1-17

Can you understand that serving God as a Christian means that the body must be entirely surrendered to God?

The Christian lives in the newness of life because Christ Jesus lives in him. Anyone can become a Christian. By recognizing himself as a sinner, by believing that Christ Jesus died for his sins, he will be born again as a child of God by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit will activate the will of Jesus Christ, the Lord in his life moving him to obey God in all that he does. This is the Christian living in the Lord by the Holy Spirit. When Christ dwells in the heart by faith, it is God that is working in you to will and to do as He pleases.

The Christian will say, "Christ liveth in me." We can remember how Jesus of Nazareth said, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). When Jesus Christ is in the believer, this attitude of mind will be in the believer's heart to guide him.

When Christ Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by Satan at the very beginning of His public ministry, He said, as we read in Matthew 4:10, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This was the life of Jesus of Nazareth while He was in this world. He looked up to His Father to see what His Father wanted Him to do.

In serving God, the Christian is not always given some specific task beyond his daily routine. We are inclined to think that in serving God, the task must be special, outstanding. But we need only to look around: we have an assignment. As the believer trusts in God, he has a full time task. The Christian's whole life belongs to God. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccl. 9:10). "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," (Col. 3:17). The Christian should always do everything in the will of God.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). Since the Christian is born again as a child of God, Paul points the way to dispose of the contrary pull of the flesh. When a person becomes a Christian he has the Spirit moving him to do the will of God. Yet because of human nature and being a child of Adam, the flesh pulls him to do as he pleases. Thus the Christian is involved in two contrary influences. The Spirit leads him into the will of God and the flesh leads him to do his own will.

Paul could say in Galatians 5:24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." This is the way in which to get rid of the contrary pull of the flesh. The Christian must dedicate himself, commit himself to the Lord; he must deny himself and take up the cross and follow Christ. It will involve a critical struggle within the heart of the Christian. He will experience in his own small way some aspect of Gethsemane. At some point he will be moved to say, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). There will be times when to do the will of God will mean denying himself of something that is very real and very desirable.

The idea of presenting the body as a living sacrifice is based upon the Old Testament procedure of bringing the animals to sacrifice. Having grown up on a farm, I would be inclined to think there were times when those animals resisted being sacrificed. All of which is to say that if a person finds himself unwilling to yield, unwilling to do the will of God, it would be natural. One must deny himself again and again, daily. That requires the grace of God. As long as Christ Jesus lived He never failed to yield Himself repeatedly to the will of the Father. Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,

that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). That is harder to do than to die outright. It would be easier to be martyred, to stand up and be killed, than to yield over and over again. Yet this is what the Christian is called to.

Then Paul goes on to say there is more the servant must do. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). This is the key to the whole matter of living in the Lord, or serving God daily. The Christian lives in this world. This world will push and pull and squeeze him into a certain shape, that would suit its own situation. These are the pressures that will tend to conform the person. Paul urges the Christian not to let that happen. "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." He will be transformed from the inside out.

Much can be learned when one compares a tree and a table. They are both made of wood. The table is made of wood and is conformed to a pattern. The table will not change as long as it lasts. The tree is made of wood also, but it grows from the inside out and has its own shape and form. Any two trees will be different. Paul is saying, don't let this world press you into the shape it wants you to be in. Instead, by reason of the life within you, let the Spirit work in you in a way to do the will of God that you may grow into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus the Christian will not give in to the pressures of the world to become a certain standard pattern but will unfold from within. Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit he will become something acceptable to God, as led by the Spirit. We are concerned about the servant serving. Everything that is done is done in the name of Christ.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). So far as the Christian is concerned, he should be very careful not to overestimate himself, not to think of himself more highly than he ought. He must recognize himself as he is. "Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Furthermore, Paul says: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. 12:4, 5).

Christians differ from each other. They are as different as we have many members in one body. Many different people belong to Christ. All members have not the same office. Everyone does not do the same thing. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." This can be seen when you look at the fingers of your hand. They are different in size and shape, and they are set at different points. They operate in different ways; one is not as strong as the other; but together they make a hand. This is what one can have in mind so far as Christians are concerned; they are members of the Body of Christ. Almighty God has planned it so that Christ Jesus is the Head of the Body. Each member will do as the Lord wishes him to do, and together they will perform the will of God. Each Christian has his tasks to perform. Pastor, missionary, teacher, worker, housewife, do all as unto the Lord. Whatever calling the Christian has will have to do with his daily living. The Holy Spirit will be working the will of God in his heart and in his practical life.

Each Christian, therefore, is led to serve according to the measure of his faith that is revealed in a particular gift. Paul lists what some are in verses 6 through 8, encouraging the believer to excel in the thing he does best. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith" (Rom. 12:6). Prophecy is usually a matter of interpreting Scripture, telling what the Bible means. The Christian should share it.

"Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching" (v. 7). Here ministry means ordinary service; and that it will be right there at our hand; that is our task. The teacher will not

have all people to teach, nor teach everything, but he should teach those who are close and listening.

"Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness" (v. 8). In this verse exhorters, givers, rulers and the merciful are told what to do. Exhorting is encouraging other people, strengthening them, helping them to do what they ought to do. Some of us are given this function that we should *encourage* others. The giver must give cheerfully. Let him do it simply. Do not make any big thing out of it when you give, Paul is saying. The ruler's "diligence" means being faithful. (If I am in a responsible position I should watch how I act and what I say.) As for those who show mercy, some make such a show one wishes they would not bother. The act of mercy must be done with "cheerfulness" so the receiver can accept it in like spirit.

Verses 9 through 17 specifically set down the actions of the Christian for improving his character:

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (v. 9). Do not pretend, be genuine. If one has the grace of God in his heart, this is what he will be led to. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (vv. 10, 11). None of this is easy, but Paul says be "fervent in spirit" and that is, actually, to be zealous. Put yourself into it – whatever you do, "serving the Lord," while "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (vv. 12, 13). "Distributing" here is giving to other people, especially the needy Christians; Paul says help them out.

"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (vv. 14-17).

Following in the path of Paul's own exhortation is the way a Christian will be inwardly led so that he may outwardly serve the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. What are "the mercies of God" in Romans 12:1?
2. Contrast being transformed to being conformed, by thinking of the wood "in a tree" as over against "in a table."
3. Show how thinking soberly (Romans 12:3) will include an appreciation of personal capacity to serve.
4. What enables a Christian to refrain from hostile response to such persons as may seem inclined to do him harm?

Chapter 9

The Servant Brings Joy

Luke 15:1-24 90

Doubtless many think the Christian should now be doing something for God by his personal ability. You have heard it said, "We just wish he would become a Christian. He could do so much for the *kingdom*." Or again, "it is just too bad that that man isn't really committed to God because if he were he could do so much."

Such ideas are really misleading. It must be remembered as far as the individual sinner is concerned, that in becoming a Christian, a basic requirement is: he must deny himself. He must take up his cross. What is to be done by him in the future will be God doing it through the person. Paul in writing about this points out that the believer must reckon himself dead in order that he may live with God. The truth is seen in the song, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

Do you realize that the angels in Heaven take a deep interest in what happens to the human being on earth? The coming of the sinner to God through Christ Jesus actually is an occasion of great joy in Heaven. It is written, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). It would seem that the joy that the angels have is generated in the achievement of Christ. The great work that Christ has done in winning and saving that soul, as well as the achievement of the Holy Spirit in guiding that sinner into the will of God, is to the glory of God. When anyone turns to God, leaving the things of this world – turning away from idols to serve the living and the true God – this gives joy in the presence of the angels of God.

We are to study this joy as recorded in Luke 15:1-24. This passage brings to our mind three very well-known parables. We know them by their common names, but these names can be misleading. The names we know them by are: the parables of the Lost Sheep, of the Lost Coin and of the Prodigal Son. However, when we study these we shall see that the significant truth in that first parable is the *good shepherd* that went out looking for the sheep; the significant truth in that second parable is the *diligent woman* who swept until she found the coin and rejoiced when she found it and called the neighbors to rejoice with her; the third, the oft-repeated story of the prodigal, points to the significant truth of the *waiting father* who received the son with joy. Joy was not so much in the feeling that the sheep had when it was found. The coin did not have any joy. The joy that the prodigal son had when he was received was very real, but that is not the significance of that joy of the angels. The angels knew about the joy in the good shepherd who found the sheep, the joy in the woman who found the coin, and the joy in the father who received his son back to life again. The joy of the angels in Heaven is sympathetic with the good shepherd, the diligent woman and that waiting father. Each of these parables illustrates a profound truth about the sinner coming to God.

The first is the parable of the lost sheep. When that sheep was lost and did not know the way home, the wonderful truth is the good shepherd went out to search, to find the lost sheep. This is one of the most encouraging truths in the gospel. To think that Almighty God will actually put Himself out to find us, to seek us, and establish a way whereby we can be brought to Him! As I look at the story of the good shepherd, my heart is deeply touched. When I think about that sheep wandering away and being lost, I must say that is very much the way it was with me.

If you know anything at all about sheep, you will understand one reason they go astray is that they are looking for food. They will go here to eat, and then they step over there to bite off some grass, not watching where they are going. Suddenly they lose contact with the flock and shepherd, and they are lost.

To be lost is the most helpless feeling in the world. This is exactly how it is to be lost spiritually. People are in this world alive; yet they are detached. They know things are not right, but they do not know

what to do. They do not see a way out. They will never find a way out in their own wisdom. The wonderful truth is they will not have to, because the Good Shepherd is out looking for them. The good shepherd went out to seek, to search until he found that sheep. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his own shoulders, rejoicing" (Luke 15:5).

I can remember when, as a young Christian, I first studied this parable. I grew up on the farm and dealt with cattle rather than with sheep. Often one of the cattle, usually some young calf, would go astray. We would want to make sure that it came home. I could have understood it so well if, when that good shepherd found that sheep, he had cut a switch and kept whacking it across his legs, giving it to understand that from now on it should stay home. Yet that is not at all in this story. Here is the wonderful thing – when the shepherd found that sheep, he put it on his own shoulders and carried it home. He did not even make the sheep walk home. He picked it up and carried it home. No punishment, no chastisement, but just joy in the heart of the shepherd.

Can you see why that would be so touching to me? I am frank to tell you, and it is a personal note I know, but really I must give you my testimony and tell you exactly what happened to me. I will never get through thanking and praising His Holy Name. When He found me, He picked me up and put me on His own shoulders. He is carrying me home. He is not going to leave it up to me. Christ Jesus has gotten hold of me and He is carrying me home.

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). He made an occasion of it. It was a tremendous thing. "I have found my sheep which was lost." The full attention in this parable is focused on the fact that the good shepherd went out to look, hunted, till he found and brought that sheep home with joy, and then brought in the neighbors and friends to share his joy with them. We have a perfect right on the basis of this parable to say that Christ Jesus has joy when the sinner turns to Him. This is what the Lord Himself said, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

Christ Jesus told this story to the Pharisees, to the good people who wondered why He was associating with sinners. They criticized Him because He spent His time with ungodly people. With this parable He is telling them what the reason is; He is seeking them, searching for them. If He could find one of them, it would bring joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented.

In the second parable, which we commonly call the Parable of the Lost Coin, the truth is very simple. That coin did not know it was lost, and did not know the way home. That coin is entirely ignorant and helpless. Yet this parable was told by Jesus of Nazareth to His critics to help them understand the joy of God in winning such people who are actually ignorant of all that is involved.

There will be some people who do not even know they are lost. They know things are not right. They are unhappy, in distress, but do not know what to do. The reason they are unhappy is because they are living in spiritual darkness. Alone, with no prospect of any kind, no one to depend upon, everything around about them is threatening them. God cares about that person. He made that man and yearns for him to come to Him.

It was the woman who cherished the coin, who searched diligently. The coin felt nothing. In a way, this makes a very descriptive illustration of the human soul. The coin just lay where it was, but the woman searched because she cherished the coin. It is almost too wonderful to understand. God cares about the sinner. Yes, God cares about you. I know God cares about me. Praise His name!

"And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:9-10).

That coin did not start that business at all. The woman did. She searched. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek

diligently till she find it?" (Luke 15:8).

There are some people right in our church congregations that are lost and do not realize it. There will be young people who were brought up in the church, yet who never have been personally brought to Jesus Christ. They are just like that coin. The woman knew, and she searched until she found. When she found that coin she rejoiced. There was joy in her heart. Christ Jesus has joy when a single human soul has been found.

I think it would make some difference to Sunday school teachers and to people in the churches, as a whole, if anyone person in your congregation comes to know Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. If that comes to pass, there will be joy in heaven over that person who has turned to Him.

The third parable, probably the best known of them all, concerned the prodigal son who, when he had gone away from home, knew he was ruined. He also knew the way home. Notice, no one went to find him. He knew he was lost, and he knew the way home. Despite the son's distress, the father did not send anyone to seek him out. He did not send anyone to argue with him. That son knew the way home and the father was waiting for him.

"And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living" (Luke 15:11-12).

Whatever you want to think of it, so far as this young man was concerned, he did not ask for anything that was not coming to him. Eventually he would receive a share as an inheritance. So he asked for it in advance.

This is the frame of mind of so many young people. Along in their teen years it is so easy to say, "It is my life, let me live it." *And he divided unto them his living.* The father very likely would have known how risky it was. He would have known what a fool the boy would make of himself. The lad asked for his share, received it and left.

"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:13). How many times young people have the feeling, "If I just had the wings of a dove, I'd fly a long, long distance away from here." How easy it is for us to feel that if we were a long way from where we are now, we would be well off. This is very natural, but it is misleading. It is dangerous. It is natural and dangerous for a person to want to get out on his own without restrictions, without guidance. So we are not surprised that the son "there wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13).

How does one waste things? A little here and a little there, and soon they are all gone. You waste them the way you waste your time. A youngster will bring home books to study, but there is a phone call to make and one to receive, a TV program to see. Then someone else to talk to and the first thing you know, the youngster is tired and decides he will get up in the morning and study. That high school youngster never intended to waste the whole evening, but it was a little of this and a little of that, until it was all gone. That is the way the young man wasted his substance. And he wasted his substance until it was all gone.

Verse 14 begins in very tragic terms: "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." The young man must act for himself now. "And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (v. 15). He learned he was really on his own: "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him" (v. 16). His thoughts turned to his father. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on

his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:17-24).

There was joy because the son came home. There is always joy when the sinner turns to God. This sinner coming to God and receiving Jesus Christ is going to be the Christian, and when he comes as a Christian and has in him the Spirit of Christ, he will serve God. So in the son's return, we have been studying the coming of the servant, the person who is going to serve. When he comes to God, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Discussion Questions

1. Does the joy in heaven over each convert start in the experience of the saved?
2. When does the joy in the saved soul begin? (I John 4:19)
3. What was the purpose in the Lord telling these parables? (Luke 15:1-2)
4. Is the future prospect of the saved soul a factor in producing joy?

Chapter 10

The Servant Receives Joy

Luke 15:25-32

Can you see that one of the great benefits in doing right is that you will have open access to God in fellowship?

One of the common mistakes made by people is to believe there is only one way to do anything interesting or even progressive, and that is to act as they please – uncontrolled, doing their thing. I can remember when I was a lad living in the country, in Canada. We considered it normal that, by the time a boy got to be sixteen or seventeen, he left home to work or he even ran away from home. In a year or two he would be back as a man, and things would begin to settle down for him. Without being aware of it, each time it happened I thought it was a real tragedy for all involved. But as I grew older and came nearer to that age myself, I saw that it happened everywhere, as the usual thing to do with very few exceptions. You might ask me here, "Did you run away from home?" No, my father sent me away from home. I didn't get a chance to run away. He sent me to school. But that amounted to the same kind of thing.

How many times young people feel it is so dull at home! This is a common snare, because, of course, they later learn better. But the feeling is not peculiar to this age. It has always been the case.

In the same vein, it is a common feeling that living a surrendered life as a Christian in humble obedience to God must be very dull and unrewarding. This became more obvious for me, recently, out in California. At that time, a number of Christian young people attended a big music festival sponsored by hippies. These young Christians came and began to talk to the other youths about Christ, and about belonging to Him. One young man said, "There is something about you Christians I don't understand. Here we are, the rest of us, doing just as we please. We are trying to have a good time; and if you look around you will see that most everybody in spite of his trying so hard, is scarcely making it. Most of us are downright miserable. We look at you people; we understand you can't do this, and you don't do that. You appear restricted on every side, but you are *happy*. How in the world do you explain it?"

The young Christian reporting this to me told me he had a wonderful opportunity of bearing witness and testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter how the public may feel – that in living a surrendered life as a Christian in humble obedience to God would be a case of cutting out a great many interesting and exciting things, and just leading yourself a very dull existence – this is simply not true. Wherever you find it done, you will find that those Christians are radiantly happy. It must be admitted that the joy of living in Christ is different from the joys of the flesh. That is true, but the Christian joy is more real and far more satisfying.

Now all of this is vividly portrayed in Luke 15:25-32. It is the case of the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son. First, we need to note the elder brother's mistake. "Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him" (Luke 15:25-28).

This elder brother made a mistake in his conduct, and accused the father of favoritism.

"And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf" (Luke 15:29-30).

It is apparent his mistake was due to an error in his information. It is always dangerous to believe what you hear, no matter how reasonable it sounds. For instance, this was the report that was given to the

elder brother: "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." Did you notice what was omitted here? In verse 24 the father spoke the words: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Can you see how that is different from the other statement in verse 27? Comparing verses 24 and 27 one can see the difference between the two. Can you see what the father saw? "This my son was dead, and is alive again." The father saw that the prodigal was changed. That was the big point. It wasn't just that the son came back, he was different. He was changed. That is what the servant reporting to the older brother did not tell him. All he said was "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound." That was not the case. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And because of this mistake in his judgment, based upon an error in what he heard, the older brother made an error and it is found in verse 28. "He was angry, and would not go in." He was wrong.

That was a sad mistake. He overestimated the meaning of the celebration. Certainly, the father had a celebration and was glad that his son was changed. The son was a new person, and this was calling forth from the father new treatment. Also, the older brother mistakenly criticized his father's action. I am not sure that he realized the element of arrogance in this. It took a certain form of conceit for this young man to judge his father's conduct without hesitation. I have been dealing with young people for most of my life. It is most shocking how freely, and how easily, these earnest, sincere young people can criticize older people without any idea that they themselves might be wrong. Such was this case. By mistakenly criticizing his father's actions, the older brother revealed his own sinfulness.

Oftentimes we have to admit that the sins of the righteous are not so obvious. Take a member of the church, who lives what you call a good life, who does not drink or gamble. He is always found in the right places, doing the right thing. Yet in the very church in which he worships, he may despise others. There may be families in that church he will never have anything to do with, because of his self-righteous pride.

God looks on the heart. God is not impressed with persons. The older brother fell into the ego snare of the virtuous. It is indeed a dangerous thing to be a good person. You are just tempted to think that you are better than other people and you are tempted even to feel that you can criticize God.

We can think back to that Old Testament incident of Jonah. Jonah was a good man. He believed in God, and he was entrusted by God with a message to take to the city of Nineveh. There is no reason to believe that Jonah was anything but a real servant of God. This time, however, he made a mistake and he decided in himself that going to Nineveh was not what he wanted to do, so he went in the other direction. God turned him around in His providence and brought him back, so that Jonah did actually go to Nineveh and preach the message that God wanted him to preach. He preached it so effectively that the whole city changed. When the city changed its ways and God changed His plan so that He did not destroy Nineveh, Jonah personally seemed to feel able and free to criticize God's action. He openly took exception to it and it is shocking to think that a man like Jonah would actually presume to question God's wisdom and conduct but it can happen. This is a snare into which many sincere good persons are brought from time to time.

The elder brother could have had the feeling, "I have a good record. It is so far ahead of my younger brother's bad record, I should have received even greater praise and greater acclaim than he did." We can say that this is very egotistical, and that would be true. We can say that it is wrong, and that would be true. It is very natural, and that thought should make us very sober.

But there is something that will make our hearts glad. Notice the father's meek, gracious treatment of this conceited, self-righteous older son. There was no rebuke, no accusation. There was actually an understanding reply. To be sure, the elder brother made a mistake and his attitude was not right, but his father was gracious to him, even as he had been gracious to the younger brother. "And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine" (Luke 15:31). Here is no criticism! There is an

underlying reminder of blessing received, that the righteous may overlook. The person who lives right, in the sight of God, is protected. That is the marvelous thing. The person who looks to God, and wants to be well pleasing in His sight is guided. These things are important. They are wonderful. But they may come to us every day in such a way that we fail to notice them. Living in the presence of God day-by-day, the Christian can be blessed on all sides, but if a person is not careful, he can overlook it.

Take the blessing of health. Who thinks about it? To have a body that is healthy and well is less dramatic than to have recovered from a siege of smallpox. Without ever having to think about that, the believer should have praised God, day-by-day, that he never had caught smallpox! It is infinitely better never to have this disease.

A home life may become very routine. Day in and day out, morning, noon and night the same people and the same place may become very monotonous; yet it is far more satisfying than the agony of loneliness. In the same way, having a good conscience may not be sensational. People might feel that a good life is rather dull, but a good conscience will let you sleep well, and it is a great blessing. Fellowship with God, to live in the will of God seeking His will, may be quiet and peaceful. People looking for excitement would say that is too dull for them. Yet it is a whole lot better than to have anxiety and fear.

Notice further in verse 31 after the father had said, "Son, thou art ever with me," he added "all that I have is thine." There is a positive benefit to the virtuous, the righteous, that we should not overlook. I can remember some years ago when I was preaching in a certain church a man who had been rescued from alcoholism came to me and said in effect, "Don't let anybody tell you that a man can waste thirty years of his life and be as good as if he hadn't. I have spent the last thirty years of my life, until I was converted and delivered from alcohol, in jail and drunk most of the time. Now by the grace of God I am free. Don't let anyone tell you that now I can go and take any kind of job. I can't. I am weak in my mind and incompetent in my skills. I am unskilled. I can only do manual labor like a person would do who never had any training. I am free before God, but the waste is there and I really have suffered a loss."

The father said to the elder brother, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32). Keep in mind the servant's fellowship with God brings joy. It is so easy to overlook the benefits of virtue. There is blessing for those who walk with God.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the temptation to pride ensnare faithful church workers?
2. Why is personal comparison unreliable in esteeming a servant?
3. Why is it so easy to overlook the benefits of living in God's presence?
4. How was the grace of God shown toward the elder brother?

Chapter 11

The Servant as Ambassador

II Corinthians 5:17-21

Do you know what gives authority to any message that is given by an ambassador?

The Christian is God's servant, not because he volunteers, or because he is experienced. It is because God has put His Holy Spirit into the regenerated soul. The Holy Spirit activates the will of the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart of the believer. The Lord Jesus said while He was here, "The Son can do nothing of himself . . . My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:19, 17). And, "I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). To obey God is the inner impulse in any Christian.

This situation in the believer is set forth in the Scripture we have for our study of the servant as ambassador.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:17-21).

Paul writes very personally in this passage and describes the one function that the Christian is to perform. "All things are become new." The Christian is God's servant and God is using him in His service. The heart of a Christian should be soberly concerned about lost people because God is concerned.

God has entrusted His work in the world to His people. We could feel that if God had given this to the angels to do, it probably would have been done right. If He had left this work as something that could be done by the sun, moon and stars, it would have been just as proper and regular as those heavenly bodies are. But in His own wisdom, God entrusted this message to believers in Christ to be taken to sinful man. He has entrusted this message to converted sinners, regenerated human beings; and He has asked them to tell this message to the whole wide world – that God is ready to receive them.

The Christian is a new creature, a new creation. To say that the Christian is saved may not say enough. The Christian is new; he is different; he is better. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This new creature was born to obey God. Former ideas and values and goals are gone. He will seek to find his own activity and service in doing the will of God. It is true that the Christian will never go to hell, for which we thank God; but it is also true he will live differently, right now, in this world. And what is so wonderful, he is going to live into eternity. It is true that, right now, he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life – now, here, in this world. He has new interests, new values and he looks at things differently. The Christian now also has the Holy Spirit within him to guide, strengthen and comfort him.

"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The Christian is given the ministry of reconciliation. That is his job. God has done what was necessary so that men could be brought into His presence free and clear. All the world has become guilty before God. This is true about everyone. That is one reason why the Lord Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." It is incredible that such an important thing as getting right with God is prepared for each believer. The only thing for the human being to do, is to receive it; to accept it by faith. People generally are inclined to turn away from God because of their guilt.

When a person is in real need he turns to God in prayer. It is such a natural thing to feel bankrupt in His presence. The sinner has nothing to bring into the presence of God. The moment anyone honestly

turns to God, bows the knee to pray, his bill for unsettled faults and misdeeds comes to mind, and that person is inclined to turn away in despair. But there is a great truth that applies here. Christ died for the sins of the whole world. The debt is paid. I know this is hard to believe. Yet God is gracious. He is kind, and we are glad that He is compassionate. The burden is lifted. The truth is whosoever will may come. "All things are now ready, come and dine." This truth is made clear in a parable told by our Lord Jesus.

"Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. . . . So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" (Luke 14:16-21).

That is the thing that the Christian is called to do: Go out and bring in the ones who are willing to come.

It is strange but true that, as long as people are getting along pretty well and are prosperous, it is very hard for them to feel the need of a Saviour. One is reminded of the rich young ruler who had great possessions and how the Lord said, "It is a hard thing for a rich man to come into the Kingdom of Heaven." (See Luke 18:18-25.) Men tend to put things off, to postpone them. Sometime we will come to the Lord, some time, but not just now. We are not ready just yet. The Lord says, "All things are now ready. Come and dine." But it is human nature to begin to make excuses.

This postponement is a provoking thing to God. It makes God angry, and in His anger, God sends out His servants again, ". . . bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." That means to say, not only those that are physically disfigured but those who are spiritually poor and maimed and halt and blind; people whose lives are not good; people whose characters are ruined; bring them in. "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room" (Luke 14:22). Then the Lord said unto the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). This is the task of the Christian. Get out there, reach those people and bring them in. Yes, even "compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Christians should actually, as it were, lay siege to those unbelievers round about them, and seek to win them to faith in Christ.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor.5:20). This is the commission of the Christian as God's servant. The Christian is given the task of winning souls to God. Most believers would be glad if churches would do that: if others would reach out and bring people in. But this is the task given to each believer because Christ died for those people. Lost souls need to be told that Christ Jesus carried away their sin. Their guilt is ready to be cancelled. Almighty God is prepared now to receive them. Certainly they have done wrong. Certainly they have dishonored God. But God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and quick to forgive. He sent His Son into the world to seek and to save the lost; this is what the ambassador is to tell.

Let us consider for a moment what this word "ambassador" brings to mind. The ambassador of a country acts for his country, but he must speak the language of the people to whom he has been sent. If we send an ambassador to the government of France, that must be an American who is able to speak French. More than that, the ambassador must be acceptable to the people where he is to live. He must give no offense. The Christian must be able to speak to the people round about him and to communicate His message to them. Thus the ambassador speaks the language of those to whom he is sent. He tries to be acceptable to them, giving none offense; and while he is there, he must be sympathetic to whatever the problem is in that foreign country. If he is sent to Denmark, he must be aware and sympathetic of the problems in Denmark, otherwise the Danes will not listen to him. If he is being sent over to London and represents the United States at the Court of the Queen in England, he will have to be sympathetic with English problems and with the British ways. If he isn't, the English will not accept what he has to say.

This is the way with the Christian. The Christian is going to deal with people that are out in the world. While he himself is not going to do as they do, he must be understanding and sympathetic in order to get a hearing.

The Christian must be faithful at the same time to his Lord. The ambassador must be faithful to his home government. While he is sympathetic with the country where he is sent and seeks to be acceptable to the people, he has a message to deliver. He has no authority to change the message. He has no authority to make it sound better. The Christian as an ambassador for Christ has no liberty to give anyone his own opinion. He will give his own understanding, but what is authoritative is what God said. The minister, the preacher, the Sunday school teacher, the personal worker, can convey the Word of God, what has been said; but they have no power, no ability, no authority to change any detail of it, to leave any part out. The Christian as ambassador may select certain things that he wants to say that would make it appear acceptable to the person. He will try to do a good selling job in presenting the gospel to the people to whom he speaks, but he has no authority to change it. He must present the whole package as it is.

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (I Cor. 9:19-23).

The Christian in his dealing with people in the world will remember he wants to establish contact. He wants to get their good will. He wants them to understand what the gospel is because he has a message that can actually save the soul of any person that responds. People will respond in various ways. Some will say, "Well, when you talk about my being a Christian, you don't think that will make any difference, do you?" At this point the Christian may be tempted to say, "Oh, no, it won't make any difference," but that is not true. The Christian must be gentle and sweet and nice about it, as much as possible; but he must say, "Yes, it will make a difference." The hearer may ask, "I won't have to do any differently than I am doing now, will I?" The Christian must kindly tell him, "Yes, you will have to do differently than you do now." He can of course remind his hearers they won't find it hard: Christ Jesus will help them.

It is so very, very important that Christians present an attitude of cheerfulness and joy because that attracts people. When an individual is radiant in his or her own faith and joyous in his or her own experience, he is attractive. Others will look and say, "I wish I had the faith you have." Then the Christian can say, "You can have it. You can be at peace." The Christian has one big message to deliver. God has done everything that is necessary to open the way for the sinner to come, and He is now waiting. The Christian must act toward other people as God's servant, and tell them so they will know. Paul on one occasion said to the Corinthians that they were "epistles of Christ, known and read of men." Each Christian person is like a letter written to the community showing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Christian can look to God and ask for grace and for strength that he might be able to carry out his assignment as an ambassador – to carry it out well, that people might learn the marvelous truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the responsibility of the witness as to his message? (I Thessalonians 2:4)
2. How will this affect a Christian's attitude toward unbelievers?
3. How will this guide the conduct of a Christian in his neighborhood?
4. What is the Christian's responsibility in sharing evangelistic services, missions, etc.?

Chapter 12

The Servant's Joy

Philippians 3:4-14

Did you know that it is possible to be unspeakably happy in this world?

Have you ever noticed the widespread gloom among men? How much unhappiness there is? When people get together in conversation their faces may light up and there may be some relief. However, when they are by themselves, there seems to be real unhappiness.

It has been my privilege to be among many people in congregations. I have conducted many worship services in my function as a minister. In the course of my lifetime I have conducted many funerals. I must admit that many many times I failed to see much difference in the congregation whether they were sitting in a church sanctuary or sitting in a funeral home. Here and there would be an exception. Once in awhile there would be someone who was radiant; someone whose mind was at peace; someone whose face showed smiling cheerfulness; someone who had a joyful spirit. These persons are rare and precious. Looking at them we are reminded that joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

Joy is not something that the human being produces. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . ." (Gal. 5:22). It is the Christian who can be unspeakably happy in this world because he has in him the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus of Nazareth said about the Holy Spirit, "he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14). Because of what Christ Jesus has done, and is now doing, and because of what Christ Jesus will do, the Christian can have joy.

Let us recall some blessings in the experience of a Christian. Because of Jesus Christ, the Christian has the forgiveness of sins. Anytime anyone stops to think about being forgiven, the heart will naturally be filled with joy. Then too the Christian has an Advocate with the Father. As the Christian lives in the sight of Almighty God his every action, thought and deed are known to Almighty God in heaven. There is right beside the Father an Advocate for the Christian. Jesus Christ the Righteous is there interceding on behalf of the believer with His own blood. The Christian has this ever-living Intercessor at the Throne of God. We read in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." The Christian can surely take this to heart and remember that at this very moment there is praying for him in the presence of God, the Living Lord.

Once the Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). What a wonderful truth this is! When the Christian remembers this, his load is removed and he can rest in the quietness and confidence of belonging to God. The Christian is freely pardoned.

As the Christian looks forward and calls to mind the promises of God, he is reminded of the Word of the Lord, "Nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19). A person cannot have it any better than that. Everything is in the hands of God. He is watching over you and He is watching over me. God is on our side. A person can say, "Then we have nothing to worry about." Exactly. This is part of our joy in the Lord. Someone will say, "Oh, but it isn't all as smooth as that. You will have trouble." Why yes! Jesus of Nazareth told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). It is when these things are put together that one can understand the ground from which comes the joy which is the fruit of the Spirit. As we are reminded of these things by the Holy Spirit, the believer's heart will be lifted in joy toward God. The Christian worships God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh. He is trusting in the Lord.

In looking at the Christian as God's servant, our attention is drawn in the Bible to the outstanding New Testament servant of God, Paul the apostle. He is in many ways the classic Christian. Fortunately for us, the Holy Spirit led Paul to write certain things about himself so that we can have them in our own

minds.

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:4-14).

Paul provides a marvelous description of the attitude of a man who has learned to know about Christ.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." In coming to Christ, Paul emptied himself of all human qualities, of all human capacities. One might say, "He still had them." Yes, but he did not put any trust in them. We are reminded of the rich young ruler who came to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. After the Lord tested him with the rules and regulations and told him to keep them, the young man said he had kept all those: "What lack I yet?" Then the Lord looking upon him *loved him* and said, "If thou wilt be perfect," if you want to be mature, "sell what thou hast," get rid of your own personal advantages; turn them over to the poor, use everything that you have for other people and "take up thy cross, deny thyself unto death, and follow Me." The young ruler turned away sorrowfully, because he had great possessions. The apostle Paul did not turn away sorrowfully. He emptied himself of all that he had that he might get to know Christ. He would not put his trust in anything, because he wanted to trust in the Lord.

It is a wonderful thing to be born in a good family, where the parents are Christians; to have all the benefits of church and Sunday School. That is a wonderful blessing, but a person could be fooled if he thought that would save his soul.

None of those things are sufficient. Only Christ, Christ alone is the answer. The believer needs a personal living relationship with the Living Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God that in many churches a person can get it. But one must be very careful, because such activity, such doing of things, do not in themselves make one a Christian. Only one condition will make the soul acceptable to God, and that is trusting in the Living Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul went on to say in verse 8: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." In living with Christ, not anything is permitted to be the rival of Jesus Christ. Not even the way in which people think about me. Not even the prestige that I may possibly be given and the respect I may possibly gain; nothing can take the place of personally depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ. When the disciples had gone out in obedience to the Lord and had preached with the power that He had given them, they came back with joy to say that even the demons were subject to them: when they preached they really got responses. The Lord Jesus said, "Don't put your trust in such results. Don't let this be the basis of your satisfaction, or your joy, because of the way in which you were used. Don't trust those things, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven – that

you have been reconciled to God."

So it was with the apostle Paul. In this sense, the apostle Paul is sharing his experiences as a member of the Bride of Christ. That is one of the figures of speech used in referring to the Church. The outstanding characteristic of the Bride in the Bible is that she has eyes only for the Bridegroom. All her affection goes to Him. John the Baptist reminds us in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." This is the attitude that a person has as he trusts in the Lord. The secret of having joy is to give everything over to the Lord; and by the same sign the really sad and tragic secret of no joy is no sacrifice. Sometimes people say, "I think that one thing the church today lacks is joy." That is true. Do you know why? Because the people of the church haven't given enough of themselves. It hasn't cost enough.

A Christian cannot have real joy until he has given everything over to the Lord. I can remember hearing of a story that was told of two men who met years after they had been in high school together. One of these men was now wealthy. The other man was a common day laborer. They were on a train at the time of an accident, in the course of which the poor man's son was killed. They searched the wreckage for the bodies of the victims, and came upon this man's son. Through all the arrangements and the burial the bereaved father showed a quietness and a peace. The rich man said to his long-time friend, "I don't see how you can do it. I don't see how you can possibly be so composed. How can you possibly accept this as you do?" The man smiled and told him that his values, his fortune, were not in this world. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesses." The poor man told him that he believed in God and trusted in God. It was because of his faith in God that he was able to accept this providence, the death of his son. The rich man said to him, "Oh Jim, I want to tell you I would give *everything* I have if I could have faith like yours." The poor man said, "That is exactly what it would cost you." If a person really wants joy in the Lord, quietness and confidence, he needs to turn everything over to Him.

I can remember hearing Dr. Torrey in one of his classes tell of an experience he had. It seems that as he was preaching in a certain city, he was telling the people about the fruit of the Spirit. He was indicating one of these fruits was joy, and he was saying that any person could have joy, because joy should belong to every Christian person.

When he finished, a woman came up to him and said, "Preacher, I don't quite follow you in what you were saying." And he said, "Why?" "You said that anybody could have joy if they believed." "Yes," he said, "That is what I said." "Well," was her reply, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and I have yielded my heart to Him, and I don't have joy." He said to her, "Then I expect that you did not yield everything to Him."

The woman was quite provoked and said, "I just told you, I am yielded to Him. I am a consecrated person." Dr. Torrey was reported as having said to her, "Well, you are a liar." She went away in chagrin and anger.

Some years later Dr. Torrey was back in the same city preaching. A woman came up and as she shook hands with him with a smiling face, she said, "You don't recognize me, do you?" He said, "You look familiar to me but I can't say that I remember." She said, "I am the woman you called a liar." And Dr. Torrey with a big smile said, "It seems you have found out that was true."

The woman said it was true. When she went home from that other meeting where she had been so provoked, she promised herself she would never hear Dr. Torrey or any evangelical preaching again. She was so angry, she broke into tears, and threw herself on her bed. The Spirit evidently spoke to her and said, "But did he tell the truth?" And it appears that this woman had been vain about an ornate sterling silver comb that she used in her hairdress. She said that, as she was lying there on the bed thinking about this and turning it over in her mind, she finally reached to the back of her head and threw the comb across the bedroom and said, "All right, you can have it." Immediately her heart was opened; she was relieved and had joy. She had held on to this one thing, and thus kept the joy from coming into her heart. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit appearing in a yielded soul.

Paul's ambition was that he might win Christ and be found in Him, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Paul wanted to experience what it was, in himself, to be completely delivered from his flesh. Paul looked upon his body as a dead body, and he wanted to be completely delivered from it. Then beginning with verse 12 we read: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is the way in which Paul lived, in which he sought all the way through to enter into the fullness of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are now ready to conclude this line of study by recalling that the Christian, as God's servant, has joy as a fruit of the Spirit. One reason why the Christian has this joy is because being justified by faith, he has peace with God. One might ask, "Is peace possible?" I am reminded of a hymn:

"Peace, perfect peace in this dark world of sin,
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.
Peace, perfect peace by thronging duties pressed,
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.
Peace, perfect peace with sorrows surging round,
On Jesus' bosom nought but calm is found.
Peace, perfect peace with loved ones far away,
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.
Peace, perfect peace our future all unknown,
Jesus we know and He is on the throne.
It is enough, earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus calls us to Heaven's perfect peace."

Peace with God is the source of joy. We can have confidence in the providence of God. In Romans 8:32 we read: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And the Christian can have assurance of His protection. He will remember that Almighty God sees the sparrow fall. He is not going to miss it when one of His own people is in trouble.

Christians have the promise of His presence. The Lord Himself used the words, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Christians have deliverance from this present evil world. The evil in the world may be all around us, but He opens the way for us into the presence of God and we can take refuge in the Rock "that is higher than I." We have the presence of the Comforter whom He promised: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16). In addition to all these things, the Lord speaks so gently to our hearts.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1).

The Christian, as God's servant, has joy.

Discussion Questions

1. What can happen to any sinner that would cause joy? (Luke 15:7, 10, 24)
2. How is the worship of God involved in joy?
3. How can a Christian have joy in spite of suffering? (Hebrews 10:34)
4. Explain the relation of the Holy Spirit to the joy of a Christian. (Galatians 5:22)