

Servants part 2 11-25-01
John 5:19,30 John 12:26

Two weeks ago we looked at the expression of a number of the contributors to the New Testament, referring to themselves as slaves. Jesus did not call them that. He called them friends. Still, they referred to themselves as servants. Even John the Beloved, who considered himself 'the one who Jesus loved, calls himself 'a servant of Jesus' in the Revelation. The Apostle Paul told the Philippians that Jesus took on the form of a servant and became obedient, even unto death. That is why God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. Jesus is referred to as a servant of the Father three times in the book of Acts, as His life was the demonstration of the perfect servant of God.

We have already gone over the most important necessities in the life of a servant, which are watching and listening. Jesus exemplified this daily as He did nothing but what He saw and heard of the Father. John 5:19 (NIV)¹⁹ *Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.* John 5:30 (NIV)³⁰ *By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.*

That is the epitome of the perfect servant. He does NOTHING by himself. In other words, his existence is to please the Father. He doesn't have his own thing going on the side. He preached and lived the truth that a man cannot serve two masters. (Luke 16:13) I think the average Christian life is doing their own thing with attempts at pleasing the Father thrown in when convenient. We wonder why our prayer life is so ineffective, our walk so inconsistent, our power so minimal compared to the life of Jesus. It is because we operate out of our self-direction. We are trying to have two masters, self and Jesus. Our heart is divided. Psalms 86:11 (NIV)¹¹ *Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.* The psalmist prayed that his heart would be wholly after God and not divided between God and other things. Self-direction was never the source of Jesus actions. He knew that source resulted in nothing. He had to see His Father at work, and enter in. Only when He heard from the Father could He judge. His heart was undivided.

Why did He so consistently lay down His own will and ways? He was our example of how to live in a human body, move with the Father, and hear from the Father. Lay down your agenda, your likes and dislikes, your methods and formulas, your preferences and ideas and yield to His. The Christian life is mystical in that it involves what you cannot see. It is practical in that the result makes a difference in your daily life. You can experience His life and see the results when you will yield to His life in you. Jesus could lay down His will because He was not here to please Himself. How many of us think life is about pleasing ourselves? Our society thrives on that. Our culture is built on the pursuit of happiness. The Lord fills our lives with happiness, but that is not what we are to seek after. Jesus said He did not come to please Himself but the One who sent Him. And who sent you? Do you live to please

Him? The one who lives in Christ is living to please Him. Most Christians are struggling with letting go of this or that pleasure to be obedient, to be a servant. As we learn to live in Him alone, to let Him be the source of our actions, we walk in the will of the One who sent us. Then we will see fruit resulting from our service, fruit that remains.

Because Jesus was a servant of the Father to the horrible death of the cross, He is now highly exalted and given a name above every name so that at His name every knee will bow. The early church declared, "Jesus is Lord." That means He is the Master of it all! All creation should serve Him and Him alone. A servant represents and acts in behalf of the one who sent him. If he acts on his orders, he acts 'in his name'. There is a persistent misunderstanding of what it means when we say, "In Jesus' name". We tack it onto prayers, but we need to grab hold of the meaning, instead of making it a magic expression. It means I am a slave acting by His authority. If I truly pray in Jesus' name, I am doing what the Apostle Paul said the Spirit does, praying according to His will. (Romans 8:27)

If a slave goes out into the market makes a purchase in his master's name, and the master gets the bill but never got the goods, someone is getting a beating. Yet we consistently pray according to our desires, our wishes and even for our pleasure. If we add, "in Jesus' name" will it make any difference if it was not His instruction to you, His life through you? 1 John 5:14 (NIV)¹⁴ *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.* If you see His working and hear His judgment you live and move in Jesus, the servant of God. You can pray in complete faith and confidence, for you know it is God's will, prayed through His servant, and you are heard because you heard.

If a servant went to his master and asked for a chariot, in the master's name, would he get it? Probably not. But if he asked for a horse to carry the message he was just asked to carry by horseback, then he has every confidence it will be provided. Servants ask in confidence when they listen to the will of the Master. If the Master gave the order, we should ask for what is needed. We have authority to ask for what is needed. We can ask "in his name".

Every born again believer is forgiven and made right with God. Some born again believers become servants, but others do not. Listen to Jesus' definition of a servant of His. John 12:26 (NIV)²⁶ *Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.* His servants follow Him. Where He leads, they go. Where He is, they are. A servant stays near his master to receive his directions. The person who serves Jesus is honored of God. The Apostle Paul called several of his helpers servants (Tychicus and Epaphras) as if it were a title of honor.

A servant of God is also a servant of man. Mark 9:35 (NIV)³⁵ *Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."* Just as Jesus came to be a servant of mankind by giving His life for them, we also, lay down our will and preferences to see others come into the

Kingdom. When we get crossways with a brother in Christ and it is not a major truth of Scripture, the mature brother will not insist on the last word. When there is a lowly job to be done, and no one moves to do it, the servant heart acts first. This verse says, "*servant of all*", not just the leadership, or the influential. A ministry with a servant heart often attracts those others do not want. That is a wonderful sign that a servant spirit exists in your fellowship. The outcast and hurting find a place of comfort and care amongst a servant hearted fellowship. The lost are drawn in by this unselfishness that is only possible when we really live in Christ. Look at the rabble that gathered around Jesus. They remind of the men David attracted when he was an outcast. David had a shepherd heart after the heart of the Great Shepherd.

Look how Paul submitted himself to others because he followed so closely his Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:19 (NIV)¹⁹ *Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.* Here is this man who is writing the major doctrines of the New Testament for us, a slave to everyone. His heart was to see the Kingdom of God grow. Whatever he could do to introduce a person to his Savior, he did. Are we willing to enter this path, becoming a slave to all, to win as many as possible? That is the path we live in Christ.

Becoming a slave to all does not mean you are a people pleaser. Though we are willing to put ourselves last to reach them with the Gospel, we do not do so to win their approval. We seek the "well done" of God. In obedience to Christ we will often upset people who don't understand our motives. We are not here to get man to back us, or to find our worth in the approval of man. Gal 1:10 (NIV)¹⁰ *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.* The difference between serving man and trying to please men is the latter really has the motivation of self. Truly serving man has the love of God as its motivation. The very life of Christ is its source.

Paul gave a few more qualities of a servant of the Lord that clarify how we serve man and God. 2 Tim 2:24-26 (NIV)²⁴ *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.²⁵ Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,²⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.* Can you see in this passage the attitude of "*a slave to everyone*"? A slave doesn't quarrel. He just does as his master instructs. Are you trying to lead someone to Christ? Instead of quarrelling, be kind. Study to be a prepared servant so that you can teach the truth of the word. A servant can't hold resentments and do a good job. Let them go and focus on your goal. When people argue with you, don't oppose them, but gently instruct. Trust the Holy Spirit to do the convincing. A servant acts like this because his Master acts like this, and his Master loves mankind. Look at the extent to which the Master went to demonstrate His love for man!

Finally, the goal of the servant of the Lord is to be faithful to his Master. 1 Cor 4:2 (KJV)² *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

There are a number of other goals that try to take precedence, but the goal that the Lord honors is faithfulness to Jesus. When the Lord returns He will not say, "Well done good and successful servant, good and righteous servant, or good and learned servant." No, the quality He is searching for, and honors, is faithfulness. You see, a master needs a servant that trusts him. If the servant questions the wisdom or ability of the master, he may decide he needs to carry out the orders in some fashion other than were given. That is a trick many of us seem to slide into. God wants this or that and I know a good way to make it happen. God knows the good way. His way is the Way. Once we wait and hear the instruction, we must be faithful to carry it out as He directs, and trust Him for the results.

I have heard many stories of faithfulness that did not see the result in this life. George Mueller prayed for a friend all his life. At his graveside that man repented of his sin and confessed Jesus as his Savior. Brother Mueller did not get to see that in this life. He was just faithful to do what God directed him and trust God for the result. The heroes of Hebrews 11 died without receiving the promises. Many times I have tried to obey in faithfulness and not seen what the Lord worked, but I trust Him for the results. A real servant does not question the outcome of the actions taken in obedience to his Master's instructions. That is not his job. His job is to faithfully obey. If God is pleased with my obedience, I am successful, regardless of what I see the results are. If my actions are those of Christ in me, they will bring results one day.

In Jesus' parable of the stewards, we find the wonderful commendation that we all long to hear. Matthew 25:21 (NIV) *'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'* Imagine Almighty God saying that to you. I can think of no greater thrill. Imagine entering into the happiness of God. That is the place the faithful servant is invited.

Let us review a few of the lessons we have considered. A servant watches and listens. His heart is set on obedience to the Master. Living in Jesus, we should seek the will of the Father, not self. Our actions must come from Him as the source for without Him we can do nothing. To act in His name is to act at His direction. We can expect an answer to those prayers in His time. We are to be servants of all men to bring them to Christ. That does not mean we are people pleasers, as we avoid the trap of being honored by men, and seek the honor that comes from God. That comes when we walk in obedience to Christ's Life in us. Servants should be kind, not quarrelsome, gentle and ready to share the truth from the Word. Above all else we should be faithful servants. Faithful servants carry out God's direction, God's way. Then we share His happiness, a happiness that is much greater than any we could obtain by seeking happiness on our own. Will you become a servant of the Most High God? Will you let His life of obedient faithful submission be yours today and everyday? That is abundant life – the Life of the servant of God, Christ Jesus.