

The Mind of a Servant

***“Let this mind be
in you, which was
also in Christ
Jesus: Who . . . took
upon him the form
of a servant, and
was made in the
likeness of men.”
—Philippians 2:5-7***

IT IS AN HONOR TO BE A servant, for the Christian who serves in the proper spirit is emulating the example of Jesus. He came to earth to be man’s Redeemer, and thus became servant of all. Jesus, whom we should endeavor to emulate, copied the example of the Heavenly Father, who always has been, and ever will be, the greatest of all servants. While it is noble to serve, yet the true spirit of service is that which prompts one humbly to do for others without hope of recognition or reward.

It is clear from our opening text that there is a direct connection between being a servant and developing the “mind of Christ,” the only begotten Son of God. Jesus, in his prehuman existence, was a servant of his Heavenly Father, having been his active agent in all the creative work. “Without him was not any thing made that was made,” declares John. (John 1:3) There was no loss of reputation or

no need for him to be humiliated in this service. However, his humility was exhibited in his willingness and desire always to cooperate with his Heavenly Father, no matter what was required of him. Lucifer, at that time, was also a servant of God. However, unlike Jesus, he aspired to a higher position in the universe than that designed for him. He said in his heart, “I will be like the most High.”—Isa. 14:14

Perhaps Paul had in mind the ambitious course of Lucifer when he wrote concerning Jesus, saying, “Who, though being in God’s form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God.” Rather, as Paul continues, he was willing to make himself of no reputation, and take upon himself the form of a servant, “having been made in the likeness of men.” (Phil. 2:6,7, *Emphatic Diaglott*) What a different attitude was thus manifested by him who is now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High.

Man was created to be the king of earth, hence was no more a servant than were those created on the various planes of spiritual existence. The reason that the humble servitude of Jesus is associated with his becoming a man is because of the erroneous viewpoint adopted by the human race. Man has come to believe that those who serve are less noble than those who are served. Seldom has any servant been considered to be equal with those whom he serves. Jesus became a “servant” in the sense that his service was disesteemed by men—its importance not being recognized by them.

The viewpoint of fallen man with respect to servants is reflected in the attitude of the disciples prior to Pentecost. On the night before Jesus was

crucified a dispute arose among them as to which one would be the greatest. They believed that their Master was to be a great ruler over men and that they were to be closely associated with him in his kingdom. There was “strife” among them as to which one was to be the greatest with him in this position of rulership.—Mark 9:33-37; Luke 22:24

Jesus observed their wrong attitude—wrong because it was the attitude of the world. He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.”—Luke 22:25-27

Here Jesus acknowledged that from the standpoint of the world those who are served are esteemed more highly than those who serve, but that he was establishing a new viewpoint, the true viewpoint—namely, that those who serve are truly the greatest. Applying the lesson to his disciples, he made it plain that the greatest among them would be the one who served most faithfully. Adherence to this principle is one of the things that separates the true followers of Christ from the world and causes them to pursue a course contrary to the spirit of the world.

The erroneous viewpoint of the world with respect to the matter of servants is due to man’s fall into sin and selfishness. Created to be a king, the rulership

instinct has become over-dominant in the fallen human nature. Man's dominion was to be over the lower forms of earthly creation, but men endeavored to lord it over each other. Those who succeed in establishing themselves in high positions of authority are looked upon by many as the benefactors of the race.

This is not God's viewpoint. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Creator is that he is a servant of his creatures. He is, indeed, their most faithful servant. His greatness in the hearts of those who are loyal to him is not because he is their ruler, but rather that he serves them. For thousands of years he has continued to serve even those who have been in rebellion against his will. All the material blessings which make life possible upon the earth are enjoyed by fallen man because the Creator continues to be a servant.

When Jesus humbled himself in becoming a servant he was exemplifying the spirit of his Father. God's esteem for him was exalted as the Master humbled himself in the sight of men and served them. The secret of Jesus' ability thus to place himself in an ignoble position before men, was because he highly valued the esteem of his Father as a most priceless possession. He took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh in order that he might condemn sin in the flesh. One of the ways in which he condemned sin was when he spoke against the distorted viewpoint of what constitutes greatness. Along with giving his life as a ransom, he set an example of true godliness for all who turn from a state of rebellion against God to one of reconciliation with him.

It was truly at great cost that he set this example. It was not merely a case of cold indifference by the world, but hate and derision were active against the Master until his death was accomplished. As the apostle explains, he “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:8) This was obedience by means of humility—that is, by demonstrating that to be a servant is, from the divine standpoint, to be esteemed as the highest form of obedience, and worthy of greatest exaltation.—vss. 9-11

Jesus suffered “even the death of the cross.” This was the death of criminals in Jesus’ day. It was a slow, painful death. From the Master’s standpoint, even worse than the physical pain was the ignominy attached to it. Here was the Son of God, who was daily the delight of his Father, who was sent into the world to be a great king, being crucified upon the charges of blasphemy and sedition. All the scheming ability of fallen human hearts and minds, aided by Satan, the fallen Lucifer, was employed to shame and deride him. Yet, in his deepest humiliation, Jesus was rendering a service to his accusers which yet will provide them with an opportunity for everlasting life. In a challenge of his greatness, the deriding chief priests, scribes and elders cried out, “He saved others; himself he cannot save.” (Matt. 27:41,42) How little they realized that by refusing to save himself in the manner they challenged him, Jesus was providing salvation for them, and for the entire fallen race. Truly, this was the highest form of service which could be rendered on fallen man’s behalf!

SERVICE FIRST—EXALTATION LATER

To Jesus, the bitterness of man's misunderstanding and disapproval was more than over-balanced by the sweetness of his Father's understanding and approval. Jesus humbled himself to serve fallen men, and they, because of their debased, selfish viewpoint, humiliated and killed him. His humiliation in the eyes of fallen flesh, however, was dignity and greatness to his Father. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. 2:9-11

This is a fundamentally important lesson for all who profess to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, for the apostle introduces it by saying, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5) Lest we lose sight of the very simple and practical manner in which we should manifest the mind of Christ, he also explains, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."—vs. 4

The basis of "strife" among the disciples at the last Passover supper was the question of who would be greatest among them. Each one was looking to his own interests, disregarding the interests of others. This was the wrong way, the selfish way, Satan's way of seeking greatness. The ultimate, utter failure of this "self-first" way is well illustrated by the contrasting experiences of the prehuman Jesus [Greek: *Logos*] and Lucifer. *(Continued on page 36)*

(Continued from page 31) Lucifer, looking to his own interests only, meditated a usurpation to be as God. His course will finally end in everlasting ignominy and eternal death. The *Logos* humbled himself, becoming lower in nature than originally created, and continued in the course of humility even unto the death of the cross. He is now exalted to the divine nature, and to a position at the right hand of the throne of God.—Phil. 2:6, *Emphatic Diaglott*; Heb. 12:2

The disciples had not yet learned this lesson. They wanted to be great, and knew of no other way of attaining greatness except at the expense of others. They did not understand, and could not, until enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that the true path to greatness and glory was that of service—considering the interests of others even before their own. This is a hard lesson for even the Spirit-begotten followers of Jesus today to learn, and even harder to practice.

Many are the cunning sophistries of selfish human reasoning, which attempts to convince New Creatures in Christ that the way of self-denial, service, and sacrifice is extreme and unnecessary. These reasonings tend to influence us both as individuals and as groups. We may, for example, try to convince ourselves and others that the time is now too short to be interested in others, that we should devote all the remaining days of our earthly pilgrimage to preparing ourselves for exaltation in the kingdom without regard to others. What subtle reasoning, and how it appeals to the viewpoint of the flesh. In reality, the entire life of Jesus was spent serving the interest of others, rather than in

preparation for exaltation. The climax of his life, fully spent for others, was reached upon the cross, and there he qualified for his present high position by giving himself a ransom for all—the ultimate act of his life of service.

The time can never be so short that it is too late to serve others. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, he delivered a message of hope to the dying thief, telling him of the hope of restitution in the restored paradise. Had Jesus, even at this last moment, decided that he would think only of his own interests, and turned a deaf ear to the inquiring thief, would it not have been contrary to the true spirit of service for which he came into the world? Even during those last hours upon the cross he served by forgetting self and thinking of others.

The matter of being a servant to others enters into and helps to make godlike every phase of a Christian's life. It helps to smooth out difficulties that may arise in our fellowship. Many problems that arise among brethren in Christ exist because one or more individuals in a congregation display too much self-interest in disregard of the interests of others. A brother, for example, may seemingly be imbued with the spirit of service, yet regard it only from the standpoint of being prominently before the brethren as a teacher. Such an attitude is not the true spirit of service, but what Jesus described as the spirit of the Gentiles who, by ruling over others, consider themselves to be benefactors. This is an attitude, furthermore, which can engender strife and rivalry among the people of God.

The spirit of true humility in service prompts one to sacrifice himself for the good of others, and

without respect to any present reward in the way of appreciation, praise, or positions of honor. It is a spirit in which one is willing to serve unnoticed and unknown, and if need be, even at the cost of misrepresentation and persecution. It is just such an example that we have in Jesus, who made himself of no reputation, but in due time was exalted, not by himself, but by his Heavenly Father. Let us “humble [ourselves] therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt [us] in due time!”—
I Pet. 5:6 ■