

“Give Me Thine Heart”

*“My son, give me
thine heart, and let
thine eyes observe
my ways.”*

—*Proverbs 23:26*

SOLOMON HAD MANY

wives; therefore, it is likely he had sons. Yet to suppose he addressed these words to one, or all, of his sons would

not seem reasonable. Since Solomon was not always a good pattern to follow, it is hard to believe he would wish to call special attention to his own “ways.” (I Kings 11:1-13) Therefore we must look deeper for the meaning of this admonition.

God gave to Solomon wisdom, along with an understanding heart, because of his earnest request in that direction just after becoming king. (I Kings 3:5-12,28; 4:29-34) Consequently, we might understand in our opening scripture that Solomon was personifying the wisdom of God, that in essence godly wisdom admonishes those who desire to be his child, “My son, give me thine heart.”

Our Heavenly Father possesses infinite power to create and control the universe. However, he does not use that power to coerce his intelligent creatures to obey him. Instead, he sets before them the

opportunity of doing his will, choosing and loving good instead of evil, but he lets each make their own decision. It was thus with our first parents in the Garden of Eden. It was the same with the nation of Israel, to whom it was said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." (Josh. 24:15) It is this same principle which our Heavenly Father applies in dealing with the followers of the Master now.

While our devotion to God is on an entirely voluntary basis, the Scriptures make it plain that in view of the marvelous things the Lord has done for us, he looks for and expects our love and devotion in return. (Deut. 10:12; Ps. 95:6; I Cor. 6:20; 10:31) When we give the Lord our heart, we give him our all. Nothing short of full heart devotion will merit his "well done" at the end of our life.

God does not expect blind, unintelligent devotion to him. He seeks a worship which is based "in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23,24) Therefore, he first enlightens those whom he invites to give their heart to him. This initial enlightenment, although continually increasing throughout our Christian life as we study to show ourselves more and more approved unto God, is nevertheless adequate even before consecration, giving us a vision of God's love and inspiring us with the desire to know him better and to want to serve him faithfully. David declared, "God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." (Ps. 118:27) Here, in symbolic language, our devotion to God is shown to follow after and be the result of having first received a measure of enlightenment.

ISAIAH SEES THE LORD

The Prophet Isaiah tells of having seen Jehovah “high and lifted up.” Greatly inspired by this vision, he heard the Lord inquiring, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” This is the question our Heavenly Father puts to each one of us, when through his Word, he permits us to see the beauties of his character, “high and lifted up.” If we are truly inspired by the vision we see of him, our reaction will be like that of Isaiah who replied, “Here am I; send me.”—Isa. 6:1-8

If through the Scriptures we see the beauty of God’s holiness, the effect upon us will be the same as it was upon Isaiah. It will cause us to realize our own sinfulness and unworthiness. Isaiah said, “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.” (vs. 5) God knew Isaiah was a man of unclean lips, but he wanted the prophet to realize it. He also wanted him to know it was only because of the provision for cleansing, by means of the coal from the altar, that he could render acceptable service to God.—vss. 6,7

It is similar with us. One of the first effects of the Truth should be to make us realize our own sinful condition, that we are members of a fallen and dying race and therefore cannot of ourselves render acceptable service to God, no matter how much we may desire to do so. Unless we learn this lesson from the outset, God cannot use us in his service. Learning it, however, we also discover, as Isaiah did, that God has made provision for our

cleansing. Our cleansing comes through faith in the blood of Christ.—Heb. 9:14; I John 1:7

How humble and thankful we should be that the God of the universe has not only inspired us with the desire to serve him, but has made provision, despite our imperfections, for us to serve him acceptably. It is only by God's grace that we are permitted to devote our lives to him. (Eph. 2:8-10) Paul further admonishes, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."—II Cor. 6:1

DIVINE AUTHORITY

While the Word of Truth inspires us with a desire to serve the Lord, there may be a question as to whether we have proper authority to aspire to such an honorable and exalted position. We cannot take this honor unto ourselves; not even Jesus assumed such honor. (Heb. 5:4) However, God's Word reveals a further manifestation of divine grace. We are provided with the robe of Christ's righteousness, enabling us to render acceptable service. God also gives us of his Holy Spirit to equip us for that service. One of its functions in our lives is the anointing, or authorizing, us for service.

Of Christ Jesus and his body members it is prophetically stated, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; ... to bind up the broken-hearted, 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, ... that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."—Isa. 61:1-3

This anointing of the Holy Spirit first came upon Jesus, and each one of his consecrated followers receives it in turn. (II Cor. 1:21,22) The Apostle John writes, “The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, ... as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” (I John 2:27) Here we learn not only that we come under the anointing which Jesus received, but that in authorizing us to be coworkers with Christ, God also gives us the necessary knowledge in order that we may be workers “that needeth not to be ashamed.”—II Tim. 2:15

This twofold thought of the anointing, or authorization for service, is similar to the present-day custom of issuing diplomas to candidates who have successfully completed a medical program at college. Such are certificates of authorization to serve in their field and also give assurance that certain necessary knowledge has been acquired. Similarly with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, it indicates that by God’s grace we have acquired certain necessary knowledge in order that we may serve God acceptably.

Here is a further provision of God’s grace. He has given assurance that he has authorized us to represent him and to be coworkers with his Son. It is difficult to fully grasp the magnitude of such a manifestation of divine favor—authorizing us to represent the God of the universe! Such is the provision of the Holy Spirit’s anointing. Thereby we have been made “stewards of the mysteries of God,” and “it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”—I Cor. 4:1,2

SPIRIT BEGETTING

The principal part of our work for God will be after we have faithfully finished our sacrificial course at the end of our earthly lifetime. Our present service is somewhat in the nature of an apprenticeship, which is preparing us to share in the future work of God's kingdom. Faithfulness now involves development of our character into the likeness of the Heavenly Father, along with the sacrifice of our temporal interests—a complete sacrifice, even unto death.

The begetting of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of a new life. Like the other functions of the Holy Spirit, the begetting power reaches us largely through the Word of Truth. Not only has the Father made provision for initiating this embryonic condition in us, but in his Word is all the necessary spiritual food by which this newly begotten life is nourished and enabled to grow in grace, knowledge, and strength. Only then will this "new creature" be finally ready for birth as a spirit being, into the glory of the Father's presence.—II Cor. 5:17

God's grace goes far beyond our comprehension! We were members of a dying race, the fallen and condemned children of Adam, but we have been cleansed through the blood of Jesus and begotten to a new nature. If faithful unto death, we will one day be taken into the immediate family of God on the divine plane. All of this is not because we have anything of value to offer to the Lord, but because of his provision for us, an arrangement ample to enable us to attain such heights of glory.

SEALING OF THE SPIRIT

God's gift of the Holy Spirit also seals us. In Ephesians 1:13 the apostle speaks of being "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." This is a further function of God's power reaching us through his Holy Word. It was God's Holy Spirit that inspired all the writers of the Bible, and in these writings are numerous divine promises by which we are sealed, or guaranteed, success and victory. These promises cover every possible need of the Christian and leave no room for doubt that if we do our part, God will see us through to glory. However, we must be thoroughly devoted to him. God expects that of us.

God's promises assure us that when we sin, "we have an advocate with the Father." (I John 2:1) When we are weak, his strength will make us strong; when our enemies attack us, he is greater than all our enemies; when we lack wisdom, he will supply us liberally; when we need spiritual food, he will give us living bread; when we need correction, he will discipline us for that purpose. If we are tired and discouraged, he will be to us as a refreshing stream in a weary land. When we need protection, he will be to us a fortress. If we are prone to worry, he assures us that the very hairs of our head are numbered. When we are concerned about our material needs, he bids us to take no anxious thought for the morrow, for he knows our needs and will supply them in harmony with what his wisdom sees best. God has sealed us with all these wondrous assurances and guarantees that "all things" will work together for our eternal good, if we love him and are of "the called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28

“GIVE ME THINE HEART”

The Lord's call to give him our heart is an invitation to give him our all. The heart, symbolically speaking, represents the seat of our affections. If we set our affections upon God and the doing of his will, it means that everything we hold dear will be devoted to him. It means that we will live and die for him; that we will sacrifice for him and serve him, knowing that such is but our “reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

The reasoning of our flesh is often very subtle. Therefore, we need to be constantly on guard lest we be induced to leave the narrow way of sacrifice. It may be suggested that to give our heart to the Lord means merely to assume a reverential attitude toward him or to be appreciative of what he has done for us. However, the genuineness of our heart devotion to God is demonstrated by the degree to which our time, strength, and means are used in his service.

It would not cost us much merely to entertain a kindly feeling toward the Lord and occasionally give an expression of our love for him. This, at best, would be a case of drawing near to him with our lips, while our heart actually would be far from him. (Matt. 15:7,8) We cannot say to the Lord that we will give him our heart, but will do as we please with our time.

It is well, therefore, that we daily keep check of how we are using our time, especially noting how much of it we are devoting to our own fleshly interests. Indeed, it might not be possible to use all of our time in the direct service of the Lord in the sense of being engaged in witnessing or preaching

the Gospel, or serving the brethren. However, the Lord accepts the consecration of our time subject to prior mortgages that may be upon it.

We are to make proper provision for those justly dependent upon us. (I Tim. 5:8) God expects us to meet these obligations and counts the necessary time, strength, and means devoted to such purposes as being devoted to him. This makes it possible for each follower of the Master to be a full-time servant. What a wonderful provision! Yet, we should be careful that we do not misconstrue its meaning and not devote any of our time directly to the Lord. We need to be on guard against the cunning and misleading sophistries of our flesh.

OUR STRENGTH

As members of the fallen race we do not have a great deal of strength with which to do anything. The Lord knows this, but at the same time, in asking us for our heart he expects that what strength we do have will be freely devoted to his service. After we have used a considerable portion of the little strength we have in making provision for those dependent upon us, there may be little that can be devoted directly to the Lord. There may be so little, in fact, that there is a temptation not to use it at all.

The New Creature needs continually to combat such reasoning as: "I'm too tired to read or study the Bible today; or to write and send a note of encouragement to someone," or "I'll take a rest this evening instead of making preparation for the upcoming ecclesia study." These are but a couple of examples of how fallen human reasoning may

attempt to discourage the New Creature from using its strength directly in the Lord's service.

TALENTS

Through the Lord's provision of grace we have certain talents we can use for him. Some have one, and some have more. Whatever our talents may be, God expects them to be used in his service. We are not to reason that because we cannot serve in the same manner as others, we have no way of serving the Lord. "What is that in thine hand?" is a question he is asking each one who has given their heart to him. (Exod. 4:2) Each of us has at least some other talent in addition to our time and strength.

Nearly all of us have, at least, a small amount of influence. It may be limited perhaps to a small circle of relatives or friends, but it is a talent we can use to the Heavenly Father's glory. Among friends and relatives there is occasionally one, or more, who will listen to the message of the Gospel when presented by one who is near and dear.

In the faithful use of our talent of influence, we are quite liable to lose whatever reputation we may have among our friends, but this is the privilege we have of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Of him we read, he "made himself of no reputation." (Phil. 2:7) If our heart is truly given to the Lord, we will gladly also make ourselves of no reputation among men.

The money talent also comes under the jurisdiction of the heart. We cannot say to the Lord, "I'll gladly give you my heart, my time, my strength, my influence, but let me keep my money." Often one of the crucial tests of the sincerity of our consecration

is to transfer our affection from mammon, and instead serve God.—Matt. 6:24

THE LITTLE THINGS

The Scriptures lay great stress upon the little things we are able to do for the Lord. Perhaps that is because none of us is in a position to do anything except what is little. Conversely, we do not want to be of the class who claim God's favor simply because of the great and "wonderful works" they perform for him.—Matt. 7:22,23

When a poor widow had cast "two mites" into the Temple treasury, Jesus explained to the disciples she had "cast in all that she had." At that time a "mite" was the smallest coin in circulation. (Mark 12:41-44) The widow's two mites were not mentioned because they were small, but because they represented the most that this widow could do. If our utmost along any line is equal to four mites instead of two, we believe the Lord would expect four mites. Thus, whether our offering is of time, or strength, or influence, or whatever it may be, it will be acceptable to God only if it represents our all.

Jesus gave a parable of a merchant man who learned of a valuable pearl and "sold all that he had" in order to purchase it. (Matt. 13:45,46) It should be the same with us. We have learned of a pearl of great price, the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) We can obtain that pearl if we are willing to give up all we have for it, no matter how little our all may be. Our "all," and nothing less, is the price of joint-heirship with the Master.

“OBSERVE MY WAYS”

Having given our heart to the Lord, the exhortation of our text continues, “and let thine eyes observe my ways.” What does this mean? The Hebrew word translated “observe” means more than simply passively looking at something. It actually means to “keep” the Lord’s ways and has been translated elsewhere as such, along with the additional admonition to do this with our “whole heart.”—Ps. 119:2,34,69

The Lord’s “ways” refers to a course or mode of action, and includes God’s law, commandments, precepts, statutes, and principles, as well as how he deals with his creation. (Ps. 119:56,69,115; Prov. 3:1) The psalmist further writes, “The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” (Ps. 145:17) We see in the Lord’s ways illustrations of his character—his wisdom, justice, love, and power. As we recognize these qualities of God’s character by observing his ways and methods in the past, at the present time, and for the future, it increases our admiration, reverence, obedience, and devotion to him. We especially learn of his ways from the study of his Word. This does not mean merely reading or memorizing the Bible, but most importantly, recognizing God’s principles and ways, so that they become our principles and our way of life and conduct.

Let us each strive to personally apply the words of the psalmist: “Teach me your ways, LORD, that I may walk in your truth; let me wholeheartedly revere your name. I will praise you, Lord my God, with my whole being; and I will honor your name continuously.”—Ps. 86:11,12, *International Standard Version* ■