

Privileges Resulting from “Good Doctrine”

“I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.” “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”

—*Proverbs 4:2; 23:26*

JEHOVAH POSSESSES

infinite power to create and control the universe, but he does not use it to coerce his intelligent creatures to obey him. Instead, he sets before them the opportunity of doing his will, and lets them make

their own decisions. It was thus with our first parents in the Garden of Eden. It was the same with Israel, to whom it was said, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve.” (Josh. 24:15) It is in keeping with this principle that our Heavenly Father is 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. As our texts indicate, he gives us good

doctrine, with all that it includes and implies, and then he asks us to give him our hearts. When we present to the Lord our hearts we yield to him our all, even life itself. This is what the Heavenly Father expects of us, and nothing short of full heart devotion will merit his “well done” at the end of the way.—Matt. 25:21

God does not expect nor desire a blind, unintelligent devotion to him. He seeks a worship and devotion which is based upon understanding, a worship that is “in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23,24) That is why he first enlightens those whom he invites to give their hearts to him. This enlightenment, while it continually increases as we daily seek to be more and more approved by God, is, nevertheless, adequate even before consecration to feel the presence of his love, and to inspire us with a desire to know him better and serve him faithfully. David declares, “God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” Here, in symbolic language alluding to Israel’s many sacrifices, our devotion to God is shown to follow, and to be the result of, our receiving the light.—Ps. 118:27

DIVINE AUTHORITY

While the truths of God’s Word inspire 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 exalted position. Surely we cannot take this honor unto ourselves. Not even Jesus assumed such honor. (Heb. 5:4,5) Here also, however, good doctrine reveals a further manifestation of divine grace. Not only does God provide us with the

covering robe of Christ's righteousness, enabling us to render acceptable service, but he also gives us of his Spirit to equip us for that service. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that of anointing, or authorizing, us for his service.

Of 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; 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; ... 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

The anointing of the Spirit came first upon Jesus, and each one of his followers receives it in turn, after giving himself in full consecration to God. The Apostle John says, "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but 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) From this we learn not only that we come under the anointing which Jesus received, but also that in authorizing us to be coworkers with Christ, God also gives us the necessary knowledge in order that we may share in that privilege.

Thus we see that the anointing of the Spirit indicates that by God's grace we have acquired certain necessary knowledge in order that we may serve acceptably and efficiently. This, then, is a further

provision of God's grace. He has given us an anointing in which we are authorized to represent him, and to be coworkers with his Son. It is difficult to grasp the magnitude of divine favor that is manifested in such an arrangement as this. Think how wonderful it is to have a standing which authorizes us to represent the God of the universe! Such is the provision of the 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 begetting of the Holy Spirit is the beginning of a new life, and is a further manifestation of divine grace by which we are provided with all things necessary in order to render acceptable service to our Heavenly Father. Like other functions of the Holy Spirit, the begetting power reaches us largely through the good doctrine of God's Word. Not only has the Father made provision for this beginning of a new life in us, but in the Scriptures is found all the necessary spiritual food by which the New Creature is nourished and enabled to grow in grace and knowledge and strength, until it is finally ready for birth into the glory of the Father's presence.—II Cor. 5:17; II Pet. 3:18

Here again, God's grace goes far beyond our comprehension! To begin with, we were members of a dying race, the fallen and condemned children of Adam. However, we are cleansed through the blood of Jesus and begotten to a new nature, and if faithful 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, which is ample to enable us to attain such heights of glory. Can anyone who grasps the import of this truth consider it commonplace, or treat such an opportunity with indifference?

SEALING OF THE SPIRIT

Another good doctrine pertaining to God's gift of the Holy Spirit is that it 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 Word. It was God's Holy Spirit that inspired all the writers of the Bible, and in these writings are hundreds of 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 whatever for doubt that if we do our part God will see us through to glory. However, we must do our part; 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 bread; when we need correction, he will chastise 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; if we are concerned about our material needs, he bids us

to take no thought for the morrow, for he knows our needs and will supply them in harmony with what his wisdom sees best. Indeed, beloved, God has sealed us with all these wondrous assurances. He guarantees that all things will work together for our eternal good if we love him supremely.—Rom. 8:28

Viewing all that God has done for us in giving us good doctrine, we realize that there is something he can properly expect of us, which is that we give him our hearts. (Prov. 23:26) We might hesitate, and properly so, to offer ourselves to him if he had not made every provision whereby such an offering could be used to his glory. Nevertheless, having made every necessary provision for our justification, and for the anointing, begetting and sealing of the Spirit, we are placed in a position whereby we have “somewhat ... to offer,” and he desires that we make that offering.—Heb. 8:3

OUR STRENGTH

Being 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 hearts, 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 providing for those dependent upon us, there is even less that can be devoted directly to the Lord—so little, in fact, that there is often a temptation not to use it at all.

One of the greatest temptations of the flesh is to take life easy. The New Creature needs continually to combat the reasoning of the flesh along this line. “I am too tired to attend the meeting tonight;” or, “I will

put off visiting that brother or sister who could use some encouragement;” or, “I had better take a rest today instead of helping with the witness efforts of the ecclesia.” These are but examples of how the human mind will attempt to discourage us from using our strength directly in the Lord’s service.

TALENTS

Through the Lord’s astonishing provision of grace, we have certain talents we can use for him. Whatever our talents may be, and we all have at least one, the Lord 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 that the Lord is asking of all those who have given their hearts to him.—Exod. 4:2

We have already mentioned the talents of time and strength, but there are many others. Nearly all of us have at least a small amount of influence. It may be quite limited perhaps, to a small circle of relatives or friends; but it is a talent we can use to the Lord’s glory, if we will. It is true, of course, when one sees the good doctrine of truth, that his own people may turn against him to a greater or lesser degree. Yet, among friends and relatives there is occasionally one, perhaps more, who will listen to the Gospel message when humbly presented by one who is near and dear. In the faithful use of our talent of influence, we may be respected by some as they see our noble character. Among others, however, we are liable to lose whatever reputation we may have had; but this is the privilege we have of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Of him we read that he “made

himself of no reputation.” (Phil. 2:7) If our hearts are truly given to the Lord we will gladly be made of no reputation among men when necessary to uphold the principles of righteousness.

The talent of financial means also comes under the jurisdiction of the heart. We cannot say to the Lord, “I will gladly give you my heart, my time, my strength, and my influence, but let me keep my money.” On the other hand, some may find it easier to use this talent than almost any other. However, we must remember that the most crucial test of the use of this talent is not how much we may give of our means to serve the Lord but of the sincerity of our motive in doing so. We are to exhort one another to love and to good works, and we should be glad to be reminded of all the various ways in which we can prove our heart devotion to God, irrespective of the amount of money that may be involved.—Heb. 10:24

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 but what is little. Surely we do not want to be of those who claim God’s favor because of the great and wonderful works they perform for him.—Matt. 7:22

Special attention is called to the widow’s “two mites,” and may we not apply the principle here involved to any of the little services we can render? (Mark 12:41-44) The widow’s two mites are not mentioned because they were such small amounts; but rather, because they represented “all that she had,” the most that the widow could do. If our utmost along any line is equal to four mites instead

of two, the Lord will expect the four mites. Whether our “mites” are of time, or strength, or influence, or whatever it may be, it will be acceptable to God only if it represents our all.

The man of the parable who learned of a valuable pearl buried in a field, “sold all that he had” in order to buy that field. The purchase price was all his possessions, whether they were much or little. (Matt. 13:45,46) We too 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 this pearl if we are willing to give up all that we have for it, no matter how much or how little our all may be.

The price of joint-heirship with the Master is all that we have. The Heavenly Father has made every provision of “good doctrine” whereby we are able to give our all in an acceptable manner. Shall we not, then, strain every nerve to respond to the divine invitation, “My son, give me thine heart?” ■