



Those Who Serve

All believers would agree that serving is a biblical characteristic of a Christian. “Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph 6:6). There are about a half dozen Greek words for servant, the most common being the bond-servant (as here) harking back to the Old Testament bond-slave. Other words can mean a house-servant, a child-servant, a minister, a deacon, or even an under-rower in a sailing vessel. All of them picture one who is surrendered to a master but ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We often speak of serving one another as believers and church members, or even serving our fellow man. All of these are good but they are all done as part of our service to the Lord. “You are bought with a price; do not become the slaves of men” (1 Cor 7:23). Since serving is a common subject and properly pictured as a part of humility and self-sacrifice, we must be careful that our service does not become a mere show. Paul warned of a “false humility” of those who worship angels, being “vainly puffed up” in that act of serving (Col 2:18). Christians can fall into the same trap.

There are those who only want to *be served*. They look for a church that meets all of their needs and lavishes them with praise. They enjoy the ministries and facilities that others have provided but seldom if ever consider what they themselves can do to serve or minister to others. This may be a new believer who doesn’t know what he should be doing as a Christian, and this is often the picture of an unbeliever who only thinks the church is there as a service agency.

There are those who only want to *be seen as serving*. Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them” (Matt 6:1). Jesus also used these same words about those who pray and those who fast merely to be seen by others. Sometimes we make a list of things that can be done to serve others and we check off those things that make us appear as humble servants. Perhaps it is necessary at first to be motivated by our selfishness to serve others but that false humility should quickly be put aside as we learn that serving is not for the purpose of being seen.

There are those who only want to *be sitting* after having served a long time themselves. Some good people feel it is time for them to sit and be served because they have earned it. This is where we older saints have to be careful. We truly have served the Lord and others for years and we are tired or perhaps we are physically unable to do what we once could. Yes, there are some great servants whose body is so worn out from a life of service that the simple tasks of life are difficult. Praise God for them! And yet, wouldn’t you love to have that servant praying for you? There is always a service to be done.

There are those, and we should all aspire to be, *who just want to be stewards of God* and faithful servants. There is a price to be paid for it. True servanthood does not seek to be seen or praised and seldom is; it gives itself to requests from others when it has as many needs for itself; it accepts constant correction and reproof from those who need correction themselves; it makes itself available to everyone except itself; its light is always on and its door open 24/7 and its phone is never on silent; its life is not its own. Paul summarized it as, “love never fails” (1 Cor 13:8).

I think there are three stages in life that match this description. The first is the toddler stage. A toddler is the one at home with the least say-so. He must sleep, eat, play, bathe, dress, and all the rest at someone else’s command. The second is the mother stage. Though she is the toddler’s boss, she is also his servant. She has given up hours of sleep; has fulfilled years of being the house servant; has been the cook, the launderer, the educator, the referee; and has sacrificed her youthful self for a household of others.

The third is the senior saint stage. Paul (“the aged”) said, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved” (2 Cor 12:15). The senior stage is not pretty. It has few of those desirable earthly qualities and so is often ignored. Ah, then this is the time for true service! This is the time to spend and be spent, to love and not be loved, to pray, to work, to worship, to give, with no time for reward. Why? Because true service never fails, not in this life nor in the life to come.