

SERVICE

When Jesus reminded the apostles of His own service to others, He used it as an example of how they should serve (Mat. 20:27). He taught them that true greatness lay not in being served, but in serving (Luke 22:26). He taught the lesson of going the second mile (Mat. 5:41), of giving to others (Luke 6:38) and of treating others as we wish them to treat us (Mat. 7:12).

The devil has so much gained control of the hearts of men today that the words *servant* and *service* are all but forgotten. Most of our world seems to be centered on "I," "Me," "My," and "Mine." The merchant and his employees often appear indifferent to the customer anymore, causing the consumer to be treated as more of an inconvenience than an asset. The mood and climate of the day is one of rudeness, self-assertiveness, I-don't-care-about-anybody-else-ness, and what's-in-it-for-me-ism. We see it in politics, sports, and entertainment, as well as in business settings. It is a delightful surprise to find someone who will go even part of the first mile of service any more, and you may as well forget about the second mile! Jesus' words concerning the rich foolish farmer well fit the way many approach life nowadays: "Soul, ...take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry" (Luke 12:19).

Unfortunately, we see it all too often in the church as well. The famine of the serving spirit in the church has turned preachers and elders into beggars and members into murmurers and complainers. There are some congregations that have a high percentage of their members "involved" in some kind of activity, but all too often those activities relate far more to the flesh than to the spirit. Elders and preachers should not have to beg Christians to study, visit, try to convert others, give generously, attend

Gospel meeting series and lectureships and even assemble regularly for Bible classes and worship.

True servants do their duty to God and to one another for the joy of serving, without having to be begged. It is the non-servant spirit that causes us to place our own convenience, plans, and desires above the responsibilities Christ has placed upon us. It is this awful selfishness that produces those who must constantly be served and accommodating others, but who never think of serving others. Such have forgotten Paul's injunction: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). One might also observe that in so acting, one also follows the example of the Lord.

Because of the deadly selfishness gripping our age, a growing number of Christians are demanding that things be done their way, or else. Of course, we must have this firm resolve about doing things the Lord's way. We dare not, however, confuse our personal scruples with God's will and force them upon others. The scribes and Pharisees were skilled at such, and Jesus laid bare their folly with His question: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Mat. 16:3).

We see this trait in those who follow in the steps of Diotrephes in their determination to dominate every situation of which they are a part (3 John 9–11). They are the sort who will "rule or ruin" in a congregation over the color of the carpet, the number of songs before the sermon, the times of meeting, and other such earth-shattering issues. These neither serve Christ nor their fellowman, but their own carnal ambitions. Let us determine to live the life of service in Christ taught us to live by both His words and deeds.

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