

The Service of God

F. A. Hughes.

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To serve the blessed God is surely one of the choicest occupations open to man! Eternal in might, in power and wisdom; righteous and holy in every detail of his acts and ways; gracious and abounding in love and mercy; the Creator of all things including man himself; the Source and Inhabitor of eternity; this is the blessed God who would have us serve him "acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12: 28). The context of this verse suggests that service springs from "thankfulness" and the recognition that grace has set our feet upon an unshakeable standing before Him. Every motive, every act as we approach Him in service must be in absolute accord with His holiness, all else is rejected. Whilst the force of the last verse of Hebrews 12 humbles and challenges us, it also fills our hearts with a sense of joy that we should have part in serving a God who, whilst welcoming us to His presence, yet maintains to the full the intense holiness of that sphere. Romans chapter 6 gives us the knowledge (v. 6) that the man who could never serve God in liberty has been put out of sight in the death of Christ. In verse 12 the knowledge of this is not merely abstract, but quite definitely formative with the positive result of "yielding ourselves to God" (v. 13). These three steps in our spiritual history are vitally important if service is to be consistent with the God we desire to serve. The unregenerate man with his deeds, his self-seeking, fleshly activities, etc., has no place in this dignified occupation. The same word "yield" is seen in Romans 12. The compassions of God motivating our every movement, the yielding of our bodies as a living sacrifice which is our intelligent service, and by which we are able, as having transformed minds to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Thus we observe the true moral way to "acceptable" service. Knowledge of doctrine and teaching, important as they undoubtedly are, cannot take the place of submission to the Divine will and the recognition of the rights of God. In John 13 the disciples address the Lord as "Teacher and Lord." In His reply He reverses the words — "If I therefore the Lord and the Teacher." The teaching and our response to it, *must* follow the realization of Lordship. Thus will our service Godward (and manward) be marked by the dignity it demands, and by the lowly grace of Him who served so perfectly.

The book of Exodus commences in a most instructive manner. The people of Israel were slaves to the Egyptians — an arduous service indeed, yet God refers to them as "*Sons of Israel*" (v. 1 N.T.). His repeated demands to Pharaoh clearly indicate that their deliverance from bondage had in view their service to God in His sanctuary. Alas! we know their failure — the deliverance from Egypt was complete on the Divine side, but their response . . . ? Let us take this to heart ourselves! But let us consider the energy of their movements in Exodus 25 (vv. 1-9). The *heave offering* revealed the wealth they possessed at that moment. They *had* the materials specified and in their zeal they put all at the disposal of Moses desirous that a sanctuary in which God could dwell amongst them might be made. Exodus 36: 7 indicates the abundance of their response. Precious service indeed!

Beloved brethren, are *our* hearts filled to overflowing with the spiritual value and preciousness which those material things typify? Deep and lasting impressions of the blessed God Himself, of the precious Christ, of the value and presence and power of the Holy Spirit and of the beauty which God puts upon His people. Are these the moral features which control our service to God and to all? In 1 Chronicles 28 David had these precious materials in possession — gold, silver and "all utensils for every kind of service" (v. 14). Then he challenges the people — "And who is willing to offer (to consecrate) to Jehovah this day?" How wonderfully again the people responded, eliciting from David

the truth — "All is of Thee, and of that which is from Thy hand have we given Thee" (1 Chronicles 29). Blessed indeed if every aspect of service is so motivated!

The New Testament is replete with the way and motives of service, but we refrain from much detail. Luke 22: 26 shows that true leadership is marked by lowly service to others; John 12: 26 that true service involves nearness to Christ in following Him; Romans 1: 9 shows that service must flow from what is inward, not mere outward activities; Galatians 5: 13 — *love* is the motive in our movements one to another, and in 1 Thessalonians 1: 9 the immense privilege of serving the "living and true God, and to await His Son from heaven." "Where I am, there also shall be My servant" (John 12).

The gospel according to Mark is generally acknowledged as presenting Christ as Servant, but so far as one can trace the actual word "serve" does not appear in that gospel. In its first verse however Mark reaches the thought of "Son" immediately. The beauty and power of the Lord's service, with its "straightway" effects is stressed throughout the whole gospel, and it is Mark who alone records the words — "He does all things well; he makes both the deaf to hear, and the speechless to speak" (Mark 7). Ears opened to hear the Word of God, and tongues unloosed in responsive praise and thanksgiving. How great a service; how wonderfully great and glorious He who was here in power and compassion and yet in the lowly guise of the perfect Servant! His work *finished*, God glorified and men blessed.

May we each be encouraged in the service allotted to us, self and its activities eclipsed by the glory of the One we serve, and thus experience the unique preciousness of Mark's closing words — "the Lord working *with them*."