

## Effective Service

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Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 1, 1909, page 15.

Christians are always affected, more or less, by the prevailing spirit of the world which surrounds them. In the days of primitive Christianity this was illustrated by the Corinthians, who, dwelling in a city noted for its luxury and license, soon had these evils springing up in their midst. (See 1 Cor. 4: 8, and 1 Cor. 5: 1). One of the most striking features of the day is its general shallowness, and lack of that force and serious purpose which deep conviction gives; and nowhere are these sad features more painfully pronounced, than in the bosom of the Church of God.

Brethren, we shall not fail in our pathway of testimony upon earth because of lack of knowledge, but rather because, though knowing much, we are not utterly possessed by it, and hence feel so little. We resemble some broad but shallow lake, rather than a well of small circumference, but deep. IT IS THE MAN OF DEPTH AND FEELING WHO IS EFFECTIVE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

As an illustration of a man who powerfully affected his fellows, take Ezra. Failure and trespass began to appear in the shattered remnant of Israel, that returned from Babylon, and the old sin of intercourse with the people of the land threatened again to ruin them. It was an emergency indeed. Ezra called together no committee; he laid no elaborate plans for reforming this abuse; he just FELT things before God, and as they affected God. He so felt things that he rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down astonished, until, realising the full extent of things, he fell on his knees, and commenced a memorable prayer of confession, by saying "*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God.*" — Ezra 9: 3-6.

Then as Ezra was himself moved, others were moved with him (Ezra 9: 4). Indeed, as the work of God in repentance and confession deepened in him, so the power of God radiated forth through him, until "there assembled unto him out of Israel, a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." (Ezra 10: 1) In result there was a national cleansing from their false associations, and the plague was stayed.

What a contrast between the noisy and ineffective machinery of man's making, and the quiet ease and grace of a heaven-sent movement. But that movement works through a man who feels things with God.

Jonah illustrates another phase of the same thing. He was one of the most effective preachers of antiquity. Though addressing a people of great wickedness, and carrying a message of judgment — always an unpopular one — yet his simple words produced astonishing results. To a man, the Ninevites sought the face of God, and turned from their evil way. (Jonah 3: 5-9).

Why such extraordinary power with the message? Was it not because the man who cried "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," came up to his mission, fresh from an overthrow himself? Jonah learnt experimentally what it meant to be overthrown by God. When, in the belly of the fish, all God's billows and waves passed over him, the agony of it must have burnt into his soul in a way never to be effaced. When therefore this man preaches an overthrow, there is a power, a pungency, a heaven-born velocity about his words, that is otherwise unknown.

Brethren in Christ, it were better for us to master well one lesson in the school of God than to acquaint ourselves with much in a superficial way.