

## On Ministry. (From a letter.)

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(from the Bible Treasury Vol. 20, page 63.)

One cannot do too much for so blessed a Master; indeed when one pauses to consider the riches and magnificence of His grace toward us, the desire is naturally fervent to serve Him, and to serve Him abundantly. And it is well-pleasing to Him. How refreshing it must be to His heart to see souls in this cold selfish world willing to spend and be spent for Him! It is treading surely somewhat in His own blessed footsteps, Who came into the world as the girded One, "not to be ministered unto (even though Lord of all) but to minister." "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22: 27).

But it is highly important that our service be according to His mind, or service may become not service; and bring His heart no joy and His labourers no reward. Just a few remarks on service, and ministry in general, may be helpful to you at the present juncture.

Ministry (whether toward the world or in the church) properly viewed is an expression of God's grace, His grace is its spring; it is His blessed way of supplying the need of souls. "When He ascended up on high, *He gave gifts*" says Eph. 4 And the spirit of all true ministry is, "It is more blessed to *give* than to receive" (Acts 20: 33-35). His servants are called and appointed by Him (Gal. 1: 1, 1 Tim. 1: 1, Acts. 20: 24), are fitted by Him (2 Cor. 3: 4, 5), and are responsible to Him, and will ere long stand before Him and give account at His judgment seat (1 Cor. 3: 12-15, 2 Cor. 5: 9).

Dear brother, you are apparently willing to allow another party to come in between your soul and the Lord, and to receive an appointment from men, to be paid by men, and to be responsible to men. Alas! this is what we see all around us in Christendom, both in the National "Churches" and in Dissent; but is it really God's order? At the least, it is faith pushed aside and dependence upon human props substituted for it. And is not the Head dishonoured when "official" men take into their hands functions that belong to Him?

If you will read 1 Cor. 9 carefully, you will get a few thoughts of value upon this matter. Paul protested in ver. 19, that he was "free from all men." Could he have said this, if he had been their employee? He says in ver. 18, that it was his glory to make the gospel of Christ "without charge." And when men criticised his service, and required an account of him, did he not indignantly repudiate their right, and remind them that he was the Lord's servant, not theirs, and that to his own Master he stood or fell?

There are cases where the Lord calls His servants to such a peculiar path of service that they cannot take up work and supply their own bodily needs and in such cases the saints of God should look after them and see they have no lack; but such instances, I firmly believe, are very rare. The apostle was not one of them, peculiar though his path of service was, he laboured with his own hands, and ministered to his own necessities, and refused to be chargeable to anyone (1 Thess. 2: 9). And in so doing, he told the Ephesian elders, he had left an example (Acts 20: 35). Blessed and honoured servant! ready ever to sacrifice himself in order that his Lord might be glorified and the saints served.

In a general way, it is the Lord's will for His saints that they keep to their occupations. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Wast thou called being a servant? care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. Ye are bought with a price; *be not ye the servants of men*. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called therein abide with God" (1 Cor. 7: 20-24). I am aware that slaves, not preachers, were before the apostle's mind in penning these words; but the principle applies

nevertheless. The Lord guide you, my beloved brother, and deliver you from making any mistake. We cannot serve Him too abundantly; but let our service be according to His revealed truth.

"Grace, mercy and peace, be multiplied unto you." W. W. F.