

"Behold My Servant"

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Chapter 1 - "Behold My Servant"

"Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:1-4).

I have found the Lord putting it into my heart quite strongly to say something about the service of God; and I think we can gather it under that first clause - "Behold, my servant." Of course, here the words are prophetically related to the Lord Jesus. There is no doubt about that, because they are actually quoted in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, verses 17 and 18 - "...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, Behold, my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased"; and there are other passages in the New Testament which are a repetition, in part of these very words.

But then, as you go on from chapter 42 of Isaiah's prophecies, you find the same word used very frequently in relation to Israel. You have only to glance through chapters 43, 44 and 45 to find the constant reiteration - "O Jacob, my servant," "Thou art my servant." But you find that Israel failed in the service, and it was after Israel's failure that the Lord Jesus as the servant actually came in according to this prophecy, and He took up that wonderful Divine purpose and vocation which it had been God's will for Israel to fulfil - a testimony to the nations. He, the Lord Jesus, became the great, inclusive, model servant of the Lord, fulfilled the service, and then passed it on to the Church. There is a very real and quite true sense in which Christ and His Body, the Church, now is the servant of the Lord, so, that it can be said - or should be able to be said - of Christ in the Church "Behold, my servant"; that is, as to Divine principle and purpose. The Church is called in to take up that service of the Lord Jesus and carry it out, and it has to do with a purpose of God which is in the nations. In the familiar words of Acts 15:14 - "to take out of (the nations) a people for his name."

Now, we shall take the Church's vocation in representation, the representation being found in three men. These men are, in principle, the dispensation in which we are living, according to God's mind; that is, they are representative of this particular dispensation which is the dispensation of the Church.

Do remember that in this dispensation we have everything in fullness. You may not think so, but we have everything in fullness. In the dispensations before, we had but figures, and every figure or type was in limitation, and failed at a certain point. Great as they were, even Abraham and Moses and the rest were but figures, and did not carry the purpose through to realisation. In this dispensation, we have them all brought to fullness in the Lord Jesus. If they were servants in the house of God, we have the "Son" in this dispensation. Service is brought to its fullest and its best in the Lord Jesus. Everything is carried through from the partial, the imperfect and the failure of past

dispensations to completeness in this, embodied in the Lord Jesus and transferred to the Church, and that means that service in this dispensation ought to be on the very highest level. It ought to be something very much better than the service of past dispensations.

Now, these three who represent the dispensation in principle so far as the Church's vocation is concerned are, as you guess, Paul and Peter and John, each of them embodying one of the great principles of service.

Paul: The Sovereignty of God

(a) In Election unto Service

Paul immediately comes right into line with Isa. 42:1 - "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen..."; and what a long way back that word 'chosen' goes! Where Christ is concerned, it goes far, far back beyond the bounds of time - the Father's choosing, electing and appointing of His Son, the elect of God, the chosen of God. Paul comes in as the embodiment of that principle in the Church. In him the Church takes up the first principle of service as to Christ - election. "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles" (Acts 9:15). He is an elect vessel; and while Paul's special election had to do with his particular function, it was only an aspect of the more general principle of election where the Church is concerned. He makes that perfectly clear later in his letters to the Romans and to the Ephesians. "Called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28); "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph.1:4). The Church is an elect vessel, foreknown, predestinated before the world was; and not in relation to salvation, for election - predestination - is not unto salvation. Salvation only comes in the line of it. It does not apply primarily to salvation; it applies to purpose - predestination unto Divine purpose; that is, that God must realise His purpose and therefore He must have a vessel for it. He cannot go on without such a vessel and so He secures it from all eternity. Election is unto purpose. I repeat, Paul was the embodiment of the principle that the eternal choice of the Lord Jesus Christ is transferred to the Church in relation to the service of God, so that when Paul brings the Church into full view, he shows that it is unto a heavenly and eternal vocation. He traces its spiritual history right back to before time began and carries it right on into the ages of the ages, and says that the Church, planted right there in the eternities, stands for a special vocation, to serve God in a particular purpose dear to His heart.

The Apostle breaks that up and applies it to every individual member of Christ, and says in many more words than this - 'If you have been apprehended by Christ, if you know yourself to have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, if you are a member of Christ's Body, you are that on the ground of election, of eternal choice for a purpose. There is bound up with your life a great service, you are a part of a great vocation eternally predestined by God. You are in "Church" service, you are an elect vessel.' It is a tremendous thing to grasp that; it accounts for and explains a very great deal - far more than we are able here even to suggest. But let us note that there is a sovereignty which lies behind our being in our present relationship to the Lord Jesus. "Ye did not

choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you" (John 15:16). There is a sovereignty lying behind our being here, and what a lot we owe to that! If it had been left to us, where should we be today? What would have happened to us? Thank God for that sovereignty which, having girded us, follows us up, and when we deviate and wander, girds us again, and we find ourselves back again and again and again. There is a sovereignty girding us. Let us make more of it. It will bring a rest into our hearts, it will take an over-amount of anxiety from us, and a wrong sense of responsibility. Our responsibility begins and ends with complete abandonment to the Lord, and trust in Him, and obedience where He shows it to be necessary. The rest is with Him, and His sovereignty has undertaken to perfect that which concerns us, and to relieve us of the very great deal of anxiety and worry and fret and burden which results from our taking upon ourselves what is God's responsibility. I think that we have not yet fully realized how great our God is. The God that we have made is very much after our own mind. We need that He should be enlarged in our own apprehension.

It was the very last thing that ever Saul of Tarsus thought of, imagined or intended, that he should be a servant of Jesus Christ; and because it was so foreign to his mind, to his will, to his intention, he was always afterwards striking this note - 'I was apprehended of Christ Jesus; it was the Lord Who did it.' It is one of those sure planks under his feet, one of those things which gives him such confidence, such assurance, as he goes on. 'I did not take this thing up, it was not my choice; the Lord did this in His sovereignty.' So Paul becomes the very embodiment of this Church principle, this dispensation principle - that the Church is chosen in relation to a purpose of God, and we are here because of that.

But it is the purpose that governs, it is the service that governs. We are not here elected to be Christians. If we were, we could sit down, fold our arms and do nothing, and say: 'We are Christians, not by our own will, but God made us such, so, all right, we leave it at that.' Remember, election is unto vocation. It is "My *servant*" which is related to "whom I have chosen." Election is in relation to *service*.

(b) In Governing the Fulfillment of Vocation

Then, again, this sovereignty governs the fulfillment of the vocation. See this man Paul. He is an elect vessel. He has to bear the Name, "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Note - he is not going just to preach Christianity; he is going to bear the Name, to carry that Name out to the Gentiles, to the nations. He will meet something, for it is in the nations that the prince of this world has his concern, and any name but his name will be unwelcome. Carry the name of Jesus as Lord and King before kings such as they were in Paul's time, and say to them, 'Jesus Christ is Lord' - and see what you will meet. If it needs any stronger emphasis, take the name of Jesus to the people of Israel. We know what happened when Paul bore the Name in those three realms, and particularly before the people of Israel with their prejudice and bigotry and hatred of the Name. Paul found himself dogged everywhere he went by that bitter antagonism of the Judaisers, but he finished his course. He said, "I have finished the course" (2 Tim. 4:7). In words used by his Master, he could have said, on

exactly the same basis and principle, "I lay down my life... no one taketh it away from me" (John 10:17-18). He ought to have died literally a hundred times, but he did not. He finished his course, he completed his service, he rounded it off, and, although he had to place his head upon the executioner's block and men slew him, it was in reality his offering of himself. The sovereignty which chose carried through to the fulfillment. Oh, take all that you can out of this; it is true. How often we have been tempted to feel that we should never finish our work, that we have come to an end prematurely, that circumstances, difficulties, adversities, sufferings, afflictions, trials, were going to bring an untimely end to our ministry, to our spiritual vocation! But here the word comes that there is a sovereignty which, having chosen, also governs the fulfillment. And it will be true of every servant, every member of Christ, who abides in Him. God saw to it that, having been called, they fulfilled their ministry. No matter what happened from the nations or from kings or from the people of Israel, they fulfilled their ministry. They had a mandate from heaven and no man could cut it short. It is as true of the Church as of Paul or of Jesus Christ. It is a Church matter. It only becomes an individual matter in that related way; but it is true.

(c) In Governing Circumstances

So the sovereignty governs the circumstances. "To them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). There is election, and there is the sovereignty of God coming in over and through circumstances to make the circumstances serve the end. The circumstances of a Philippian jail further the Gospel. Circumstances of shipwreck fulfil the purpose of God. Everything that Paul catalogues of adverse circumstances - including treacherous brethren - of it all he says, "I would have you know... that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12). It speaks of sovereignty taking hold of circumstances where the purpose is concerned. This is all a part of the election.

That is not all that might be said about Paul, but it brings very strongly into view this principle of this dispensation where the Church is concerned, that election operates in relation to purpose.

Peter: The Formation of the Servant

As to Peter, what does he represent so far as the service of God is concerned in this dispensation? I do not think there is any more fitting word than the word 'formation.' Peter became a great servant of Jesus Christ. He did serve this dispensation tremendously. If there was one man of all the apostolic circle who needed to be made a servant, needed to be formed, it was Peter. What rough material he was! How raw he was! Yes, there was roughness, there was ignorance, instability, unreliability about him. He was not of the learned, the sophisticated; there was nothing of that about Peter; but he became a mighty servant of Jesus Christ, and everybody had to take note that this ignorant and unlearned man had become remarkably instructed and qualified and capable; that this man, who at one time shrank when a little servant maid associated

him with Jesus, had now become full of courage. This man, who at one time was anything but like a rock, is now a rock. Oh, how great was the formation in this servant!

We are chosen, elect, in Christ, and all the sovereignty of God lies behind that if only we come into place and into line. It does not mean that there is nothing to be done in us. There is a great deal of formation needed. We know that; probably we are far too obsessed with that side of things. We are very depressed about our being so unfit, unqualified if not disqualified. But the same sovereignty that elected worked out in formation, saw to it that the ignorant man became an instructed man, the weak man became a strong man, the man so rough and so raw became one of God's gentlemen. I detect that fine trait in Peter as he grows older. "As our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you" (2 Pet. 3:15). That is the man whom Paul withstood to his face. He might have held a big grudge against Paul, and always felt the sting of that withstanding, but no - "our beloved brother Paul." He is a gentleman, at any rate. He is too big for spitefulness, revenge and pettiness. God has done a big thing.

The only thing to ask now is, are we makeable, adjustable, formable? God will do it; the same sovereignty will make us able ministers.

John: Spirituality Expressed in Love

Finally, John; and what is John as far as principle is concerned? He can be summed up in one word - spirituality. He was a man who had marvellous capacity for seeing through things, never taking things just as ends in themselves, beginning and ending with the things. In his Gospel, it is like that all the way through. John has laid hold of things. Yes, Nathanael under his tree, the marriage in Cana of Galilee, the interview with Nicodemus, the woman of Sychar, the impotent man lying by the pool of Bethesda - all the way along he is taking hold of these incidents and looking right through and giving you a spiritual principle in every one. He is not satisfied simply to narrate happenings; he is saying that those things contain spiritual value and meaning. That is the value of John - his spiritual perception. He is not living on the surface, he is getting the inner meaning of things, and passing on those spiritual values to the Church. Much might be said of John and his spirituality. It is something that is very necessary in the matter of true service.

The Church is not just an earthly institution, a temporal order. The Church is the embodiment of great, heavenly, spiritual truths and values. You have to get through all these externalities and formalities to spiritual principles and meanings, and when you get there you are touching life. And that word 'life' is one of John's great words.

If we were to sum up spirituality in one word, we should say spirituality is pre-eminently expressed in love. That is John. We may have the tongues of men and of angels, we may have the gift of prophecy or any other gift, but if we have not love we are not spiritual people. Love is characteristic of truly spiritual people, and that is the great vocational power. "By love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). Love is the key to true

service. We never get far on the basis of legalism. It is love that builds up. It is love that is the real power of God amongst men, to convict, and convince.

"Behold my servant... my chosen." Yes, behind the service to which we are called is a sovereignty operating, bringing us into the fellowship of God's Son with a great purpose in view. (I have not dwelt upon the purpose in its details; I merely state the fact of a great purpose to which we are called.) That sovereignty is operating in making us meet for the Master's use. God is going on with the work sovereignly. He is forming us; and in that same glorious election He is seeking to make us spiritual people, as His Church is a spiritual thing. That means that it is not simply some framework. It is the embodiment and the transmitting of spiritual, eternal values. They are the things that matter. The spiritual is the real.

Chapter 2 - The True Servant and the Grace of God

"Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1).

In our previous meditation, when we had seen the passing on into the Church of the great vocation, and were speaking about the electing of the Church in relation to the eternal purpose, we reminded you that, seeing that it is the Church as the Body of Christ that is the eternally predestined instrument for the fulfillment of the purpose of God (that very great purpose of God being brought through sovereign grace into that Church, that spiritual Body) we are therefore individually in the election to service. By our very calling, the great purpose becomes ours. In our very apprehending by Christ, the greatest purpose of all ages comes to rest upon us, we are found in it.

The Purpose to be Served

Two things remain to be said in that particular connection before we proceed with other matters. One is as to the purpose. What is the purpose of the ages? Well, it is made perfectly clear in revelation through Paul that the purpose is to sum up all things in Christ - the universal fullness of God's Son, first gathered into Him, and then mediated by Him through all ages to come. Into that we, by grace, are introduced. That is why we have been brought into the fellowship of God's Son. That is the meaning of our ever having been saved, saved with a vast, timeless, universal purpose, and that becomes the service of our lives.

What Service Is

The second thing is just that. What is the work of the Lord? What is Christian service from God's standpoint? It is contributing to the fullness of Christ. It is in the measure of each several part ministering to that end, that all things shall be summed up in Christ, and that He shall be the fullness of all things. That great Divine goal has many ways and many means of attainment, and it is not a matter of whether you or I are serving the Lord in the same way as someone else. That is not the point at all. We standardise and departmentalise Christian work, and we think of the activities of ministers and missionaries and suchlike functions, and we call that the work of the Lord, we think of that when we speak of going into Christian service; but while I do not say that that is not the work of the Lord, it is a very narrow and a very artificial way of viewing things. The work of the Lord is, and can be, no more than contributing to the fullness of Christ and ministering of that fullness to Him and from Him. How you do it is a matter of Divine appointment, but that is the work of the Lord. So it is not necessarily a matter of whether I am in what is called the ministry, a missionary or a Christian worker, in this particular category or that, or whether I am serving the Lord in the way in which certain others are serving Him. That is quite a secondary matter. We would all like to be doing what certain people are doing, and doing it in the way they are doing it. You might aspire to be an apostle Paul - probably if you understood a little more you would not! But you see, whether Paul is doing it along his Divinely appointed line, in his Divinely

appointed way - or Peter - or John - or this one or that one - the object comes first, the way afterward. The service of the Lord - whatever may be the means, the method - is ministering *to* the fullness of Christ, and ministering *of* that fullness, and you may be called upon to do that anywhere. It can be done just as much out of public view as in public view. Many who have ministered to the Lord and by whom He has been wonderfully ministered are those of whom the world has heard and read nothing. This, you see, is a 'Body' matter, and a body is not all hands, not all major members and faculties. A body is comprised of numerous, almost countless, functions, many of them remote and very hidden, but they all minister in a related way to the whole purpose for which the body exists, and that is a true picture of the service of God.

So think again. While we would not put you back from aspiring to the fullest place of service, nor say that you are wrong in desiring to be a missionary, to go forth into the world in a full-time spiritual capacity, remember that even before the Lord puts you into that specific work you are a minister all the same, for 'minister' is not a name, a title, a designation but a function; and the function is contributing something to the fullness of Christ, and ministering something of that fullness. So it comes back to us as a question - What am I ministering of Christ, what am I contributing to that ultimate fullness? If it be by leading the unsaved to Him, I am adding to Christ, so to speak. That is all it means, but that is what it means. I am building up Christ. If I am encouraging the saints, I am ministering to Christ and of Christ. That is "my servant... in whom my soul delighteth." In whom does God delight as His servant? Those who minister to His Son, and that is the beginning and the end, however that may be done by Divine appointment. Having said that, let us go on a little further with this matter of the servant.

The Beginning of Service the Servant Himself

"Behold, my servant." God calls attention to the servant in whom His soul delighteth. The beginning of all service in relation to God is the servant himself. What makes a servant of God? We think of a servant of God being made by academic training, Bible teaching, by this or that form of equipment, and we think when we have all that, when we have been through the course and have in our minds all that can be imparted of that kind, we are the Lord's servants. But that is not the way the Lord looks at it at all.

In the first place, the Lord looks at the servant, and He is going to demand that He shall be able Himself to point to His servant and say, "Behold, my servant." I know that there is a right sense in which the instrument has to be out of view, but only in one sense; that is that he, in his own person, his own personal impression as a man, his own impact by nature, shall not be the registration made upon people; only in that sense he has to be out of view. There is another sense in which he has to be very much in view. If that were not true, all the autobiography in Paul's writings would be wrong in principle. Paul keeps himself, in a right sense, very much in view. He calls attention to himself very properly and very strongly and persistently. The Lord is going to require that He shall be able to say, "Behold, my servant," and the servant to whom He will call attention will be the servant who is the impression of Christ. Yes, Christ registered,

Christ presenced, Christ apparent, in the servant. The beginning of all service, I repeat, is the servant himself. God is far more concerned with having His servants in a right state than He is with having them furnished with all kinds of academic qualifications and titles. It is the man, it is the woman, that God is concerned with.

If you turn to the letters of Timothy, you find there that beautiful designation of the servant of the Lord, "O man of God" (1 Tim. 6:2) Paul's appeal to Timothy is in those terms. And then, speaking of the study and knowledge of the Scriptures, he uses the same phrase again "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). But note the order - he says, "that the man of God may be... furnished completely," not, that there may be a complete furnishing to make a man of God; the man of God already exists. Now all his study with the Word is to make him who is the man of God an efficient workman. The man of God comes before all his study. He is that before he has a knowledge of the Scriptures.

You know that 'man of God' was the great designation given to some of the prophets of old. Elijah on one occasion, having been hidden by God at the brook Cherith, found the brook to dry up; and the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath... behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee" (1 Kings 17:9). Elijah went, and you remember how he found the food situation. She was gathering two sticks to bake her last cake for her son and herself, and then to die. But the barrel of meal did not fail: the Lord was faithful to His word. But then, after that, it came to pass that the woman's son fell sick, and so sore was the sickness that there was no breath left in him. The woman made her very pathetic appeal to the prophet. He took the child up to his own chamber, and called upon the Lord, and saw the child revive, and he presented him alive to the mother, who said, "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." What were the credentials of his ministry? that he had the secret of life triumphant over death. He had the word of life, and the word of life is not always the mere usage of Scripture. You can use the Scripture and it may have no effect at all, or you can use it and it may have a mighty effect. A great deal depends upon who uses the Scripture. It is the man of God who can use it in that way and be attested as the true servant of the Lord. It is the spiritual power of life that is in the man that makes him (to use Paul's words to Timothy) an approved servant of God. "O man of God."

"Behold, my servant." Do you grasp the point? It is with you and with me that the Lord is concerned; it is with what we are, it is with our personal knowledge of Himself. It is that we may have within us the secrets of the Lord, that it may be true of us as it was of the Lord Jesus and of others that the key to the situation spiritually is in our hands. We, as Elijah, hidden away in secret, have been in touch with God. There is a background. God had said to Elijah, "Hide thyself"; and he was a long time hidden before the word of the Lord came, saying, "Go, show thyself...." Someone has remarked that for every servant of God there must be much more of the hidden life than of the public life. How true that is! The Lord will take pains to ensure that the secret history, the spiritual history, of every true servant of His is looked after. With all the eagerness to get out to do the work - and may it not abate! - with all our

enthusiasm to be active, all our desire and craving to be serving, let us remember the first thing is the servant, not the service. The first thing, the beginning of all service, is the instrument. We see that the servant comes firstly into the Lord's view, that He may have one to whom He may draw attention in a right way and say, 'Look at that servant of Mine, and see My work, see My grace, see My power, see the traces of My hand.' When the Lord has brought us to the point where that is possible, then certain features will come out.

The Marks of a True Servant

(a) Glorifying in the Grace of God

The first feature of the God-approved servant, the true servant of God, is his glorying in the gospel of the grace of God on personal grounds. It is not, after all, such a far cry from Isa. 42:1 - "Behold, my servant" - to Isa. 61:1 - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" - to proclaim the year of grace. Glorying in the gospel of the grace of God - yes, on personal grounds.

Let us look at the letters to Timothy and Titus. These are the letters of service, the letters of one great servant of God to another servant of God, one great man of God to another man of God.

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope" (1Tim. 1:1). That phrase "God our Saviour" is peculiar to these pastoral letters; you find it nowhere else, and in these letters it occurs seven times. Do you not think it is significant that, not to an unsaved person and not to a newly converted person, but to a servant of the Lord fairly fully fledged (for, as you notice in the next verses, the Apostle is saying that he left Timothy at Ephesus to look after things; he was in pastoral responsibility, and the Ephesian responsibility turned out to be no small thing; and similarly in the case of Titus), Paul, now well-advanced in life and service, writes to Timothy and to Titus in places of responsibility, in this way - "God our Saviour," repeated seven times. That word Saviour was not a word used by Paul with some extraordinary new meaning in it. It was one of the common words of everyday life among the Greeks at that time. It was the word on the lips of the soldier who had come back from battle and had been delivered from being killed, and he said he had known salvation. It was the word of the sailor who had been rescued from the deep when his ship had gone down, and he said he had been saved. It was the word of the physician who had brought someone back from a desperate illness, and he called it their salvation. A common word - the common language which everybody knew and understood; he was not embellishing this with something profound, he was right there in the simplicities - God Who has saved us, our Saviour; the common salvation.

"And Christ Jesus our hope." Well, that is a beginning word for believers, for the drowning sailor, for the soldier besieged or encompassed, for the invalid gripped by the

deadly fever - hope for them all. It is very beautiful, as you follow through this letter, to see how much Paul dwells in that realm.

"...according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service; though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Christ Jesus show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:11-16).

"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times" (1 Tim. 2:3-6).

That is all glorifying in the gospel of the grace of God - and very late on in Paul's life. My point, while being perhaps very simple, is a very important one - that nothing is to cast any shadow over our glorying in the grace of God; and there are quite a lot of things that do that, I find. A lot of people become taken up with what is called advanced truth, and they become heavy, almost morose, they are burdened about this great teaching, and lose all their glorying in the grace of God. Nothing should ever be allowed to bring a shadow on this glorying in the grace of God on the part of a servant of God. Paul maintained that glorying right to the very end, and here he is saying to Timothy, by example as well as by precept, 'However many worries there are at Ephesus, however many the problems in the churches, however much you may be aspiring to a higher life, however much you may feel your own unworthiness and weakness, never lose your glorying in the gospel of grace.' That is really the import of it all - to bring Timothy back to this. 'There are many things in yourself and in men's attitudes toward you (they will despise your youth), in your sufferings physically (your oft infirmity), there are plenty of things to bring a cloud over your life, but never allow anything to eclipse or becloud the great wonder of the grace of God in salvation.' Perhaps some of us need to recover a little more of that.

Christ was a very great teacher, but He was also a great preacher of the grace of God, and here it is declared - He took up the very words from Isa. 61 and applied them to Himself at Nazareth, declaring that the very purpose of His coming and of the anointing of the Spirit was to preach the gospel, the good news, to proclaim the year of grace. Paul was a great teacher; next to the Lord Himself, there has been no greater in the dispensation; but with all that he knew, all that he was, all his profound understanding of spiritual things, he maintained to the end his glorying in the simple basic reality of the grace of God in salvation. I believe - and I am saying a very serious and responsible thing when I say it - that the Lord will allow anything rather than that we should get away from grace. I am going to say something now that I think may be very terrible in

your hearing; if we have got away from grace the Lord may even allow a fall, and maybe a terrible fall, into sin in order to bring us back in a personal way, so that on personal grounds the supreme note in our lives should be the grace of God. I say, He will allow anything rather than that we should get off the ground of the grace of God. That is one thing He does demand, and will have - a true, adequate, apprehension and acknowledgment of the grace of God. We have no other ground on which to stand, from which to move. It is all the infinite grace of God, the mystery of His grace to us.

(b) Humility

Such an apprehension produces humility, and of all the graces flowing from grace, humility is the greatest. The opposite of humility is the greatest evil - that is, pride. There never was a greater sin than pride. It brought Satan from his high estate, and the angels that fell with him, and it brought the whole race crashing down in the awful fall. It necessitated God's Son taking the lowest place, suffering, dying - pride brought all that tragedy about. Humility is of great price in the sight of God, and it is a right apprehension of the grace of God that produces humility.

(c) Assurance

Grace produces assurance, and what is the use of any servant going out to serve the Lord who has not assurance? The enemy tries to destroy our testimony by robbing us of our assurance. He has destroyed many a ministry in that way. If we really apprehend grace, it brings great assurance. Thank God for His grace, grace which chose when I did not choose, grace which has kept when many times I would have given up; grace that has done so much gives me assurance that it will complete the work. Grace started and grace will finish, and that brings confidence. Get off the ground of grace and you will be off the ground of assurance.

(d) Joy

And a sufficient apprehension of the grace of God brings joy, it must bring joy. If we get away from the ground of works - that miserable ground of what we are, what we can or cannot do - on to the ground of His infinite, redeeming, keeping, perfecting grace, we are bound to get on to the ground of joy. You cannot explain the joy of Paul to the end on any other ground at all. You take the sum of all his sufferings and trials and disappointments and problems; those who owed everything to him spiritually at length turning away from him, the very churches for which he had hazarded his life having no more room for him, close friends of missionary travels forsaking him; and yet full of joy, and to the very end of his life exhorting the saints to rejoice in the Lord. Why? It can only be because he has such a tremendous hold on sovereign grace. Grace will accomplish the work, grace will perfect what grace began.

The True Servant's Theme and Testimony - Grace

Arthur Porritt, the biographer of Dr. Jowett, has a notable chapter entitled "His Gospel," in which he seeks to analyse the message of the great preacher. "The supreme note of his preaching," he says, "was the proclamation of the all-sufficiency of Redeeming

Grace in its relationship to the worst... The eternal love of God was his basal doctrine of Christianity, and he proclaimed the illimitable love of God with unwearied insistence.... To the literature of Redeeming Grace, Jowett made a rich contribution by his sermons and books. It was the 'big theme' to which, above all others, he returned again and again, as if, of all truth, it was the one facet that entranced him.... To Jowett, Redeeming Grace was the fulcrum of the evangelical message. 'With all my heart,' he said, 'do I believe that this Gospel of Redeeming Grace is the cardinal necessity of our time.' 'I cannot do anything better than magnify the grace of God.' 'One could preach twenty sermons on it.' Grace was Jowett's sovereign word. He was always probing its depths to discover some new aspect of its unsearchable riches. Each discovery he heralded with satisfaction."

Here is a specimen of his preaching of Grace - "There is no word," he once declared, "I have wrestled so much with as grace. It is just like expressing a great American forest by a word. No phrase can express the meaning of grace. Grace is more than mercy. It is more than tender mercy. It is more than a multitude of tender mercies. Grace is more than love. It is more than innocent love. Grace is holy love, but it is holy love in spontaneous movement going out in eager quest toward the unholy and the unlovely that by the ministry of its own sacrifice it might redeem the unholy and the unlovely into its own strength and beauty. The grace of God is holy love on the move to thee and me, and the like of thee and me. It is God unmerited, undeserved, going out towards the children of men, that He might win them into the glory and brightness of His own likeness."

Dr. Jowett, wherever he went, drew the multitudes. My point for the moment is this - if that was so, and that was his theme, it shows what people need, it shows to what the heart responds. There is nothing that can take the place of the gospel of the grace of God. If you think that when you get into 'Ephesian' realms you get on to some higher ground, look into the Ephesian letter and underline the word 'grace,' and you will find "Ephesians" is full of grace. You cannot get away from it, however high and far you go. Rather it is the other way. The greater the revelation and the more the wonder and the vastness of Divine purpose comes to your heart, the more you go down and worship for the grace of God. No teaching ought ever to carry us away from the grace of God.

But I did say this - the true servant glories in the grace of God on personal grounds; not as a subject, not as a theme, however entrancing and wonderful; not as something in the Bible, not as something that has worked miracles in lives in India and in China and in London; but as something by which he himself is living today. That is where Paul was constantly coming in with his personal pronoun. "I obtained mercy..."; "unto me... was this grace given." It is right back there on personal grounds, and the Lord will keep it there. Oh, do not go out with a theme; go out as a man, a woman, who embodies the grace of God, and is never, never tired of extolling that grace. It is the hall-mark of a true servant of God.

Chapter 3 - The Servant

Reading: Isa. 52:13-15; 53:1-12

"Behold, my servant..." (Isa. 52:13)

"Behold, the Lamb of God" (John 1:29)

"Behold, the man!" (John 19:5)

"Behold, your King!" (John 19:14)

We are going to be quite brief and simple in what we say in the fourfold connection of service represented here - so very full and altogether defeating every attempt at bringing out its depth, its wonder, its glory; but our hope is that, altogether apart from what is said, we shall be touched in our hearts by the spirit of service breathed by these four designations.

The Servant

"Behold, my servant." It does not need a great deal of insight to see that those four designations correspond to what is in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah's prophecies. (In passing, it is much to be regretted that what has been called the fifty-third chapter should begin at the question, "Who hath believed our message?" In the original text the new section begins at verse 13 of what is Chapter 52 - "Behold, my servant" - and should run right on as we read it; and then all that follows is the servant seen from different standpoints, and those different standpoints are the four which we have mentioned - "My servant," "the Lamb of God," "the Man," "your King.")

Matthew, when he quotes Isa. 42:1 - "Behold, my servant" - uses the Greek word for bond-slave - "Behold, my bond-servant" or "bond-slave" (Matt. 12:18) - which at once gives a different complexion to the whole matter of the servant and His service; for when it comes to the bond-slave - the indentured, branded bond-slave - you know that all personal rights and liberties have been abandoned. For such, there are no personal rights and no personal liberties, they have been surrendered. The idea, therefore, of the servant of the Lord as represented by the Lord Jesus is that of a bond-slave, and this implies utter self-emptying. (And can it be otherwise with any other servant of the Lord? Surely it is impossible for us to assume any higher position in our service to the Lord than He took.) So Paul, when he says "taking the form of a bondservant" links with it - he "emptied himself" (Phil. 2:7).

You see, He was reversing the whole course of evil. The Cross - which is but the point at which this self-emptying reaches its fullness and finality of expression and demonstration - is the culmination of an undoing and an emptying of something which had no right. By letting go His rights, He undid false rights. The whole course of evil, of sin, began with Satan and is written in the history of man, who, at the instigation of Satan, sought to have personal fullness of rights and liberties, taking it out of the hands of God and having it in his own hands. Satan began it, even in the very height of his glory, and it was a tremendous thing that he lost. We will not go back in detail to those

descriptions of him in person, position and office before his fall - the covering cherub occupying the position which those custodians of the very mercy-seat within the tabernacle later occupied, "the anointed cherub that covereth: ...thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Eze. 28:14), and so on. And he sought more than that. What more was there to have but the very throne of God, equality with God, and in that false ambition and aspiration to have the very place of God within himself, to be the central object of worship? Satan brought into man's nature all that which we know exists within ourselves of desire to have things our way, to be regarded as something: or, to put it the other way, all that hatred for being nothing and being emptied. You know what human nature is now. All this that we in our lifetime have seen and known in world affairs is simply the outworking of that original evil - to have within your own power the dominion, the godship, the worship. To undo it all, the Lord Jesus emptied Himself - and that is service; to undo that. It is not only the bringing of God into His place, but also the bringing back to God of everything that has been taken from Him. That is the spirit of service.

It works out this way - that, in order to get everything for God, we have no ground of our own to stand on. If God is going to be all in all, as He ultimately is going to be, it will be by this way of the Cross; firstly, by the Son's emptying of Himself; and then by our being emptied. Our emptying is not in the same realm as His, for we have not His rights and His glories and His fullness, but still it is an emptying, and God only knows what that means in its full measure. We know a little of the way of the Cross in our own lives, finding ourselves all the time being emptied and poured out, every bit of ground of selfhood taken away to give God His full place. "Behold, my servant," "my bond-slave." That means utter self-emptying.

The Lamb

"Behold, the Lamb of God" - and that only carries what we have said to its final step. If the very essence of servant-hood is obedience unto another, the repudiation of all one's own rights, then the Lamb says that that obedience is unto death. "...taking the form of a bondservant... becoming obedient even unto death" (Phil. 2:7-8). You pass at once from the slave to the Lamb, the Lamb obedient unto death. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7) in complaint, in revolt, in objection, in retaliation, in resistance, in excuse, in self-pity. No! "...becoming obedient even unto death, yea, death of the cross."

"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" The sin - not the sins - of the world; the whole world's sin. What is the whole world's sin? It is Adam's sin; it is disobedience through unbelief. That is the world's sin. Paul argues that out in his letter to the Romans - the unbelief, the disobedience, from the very beginning. He, the Lamb, takes away the sin of the world, the whole world's disobedience, in His obedience. He compasses all disobedience in His one act of obedience by which He sanctifies them that believe once for all. He takes away the sin.

If you want that illustrated, you have the simplest and most familiar of illustrations. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" Where did that Lamb first come into view, in type, in figure? In Egypt, on the Passover night. "The Lord spake unto Moses... They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household" (Ex. 12:1,3). Now, there was no virtue in the actual animal or its blood. The blood of lambs, rams, bulls, goats, had no virtue; but the virtue was typically in their obedience which was so utter as to be unto death. The deep doctrine here is that life springs out of death. The death of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb meant the life of the believer through faith. While death swept through the land, life was theirs through faith. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin" - the unbelief and the disobedience.

You know that is pressed all the way through with Israel. In the brazen serpent - "if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. 21:9). It was the obedience, it was the faith, that was virtuous - not the serpent. The faith of the Son of God led Him to death in His Cross - faith in God Who raiseth the dead. He looked through the Cross and was obedient unto death, believing in the God of resurrection. So, life through His faith. The Apostle says, "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20); the virtue of His faith over against the world's unbelief; the virtue of His obedience over against the disobedience of the whole world. The Lamb of God bore away the sin of the world.

The Man

"Behold, the man!" I expect there was a sneer on Pilate's face when he said that. Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and a purple garment. It was all done in mockery and for ignominy, and as He came out these words in Isa. 52:14 were literally fulfilled - "Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men)." Pilate doubtless waved his hand in the direction of Jesus and said, derisively, "Behold, the man!" You see the Cross bringing His manhood down to shame and degradation. They despised Him; His visage was marred more than any man; there is no man in the whole race who is such an object of contempt as He; "more than any man... more than the sons of men." This very word reminds us of a title which He chose for Himself and loved to use of Himself - "the Son of man." Why did He use it? Because it related Him to the race, it brought Him into kinship with man. And here in the Cross, as man in this deplorable, ignominious state, He shows what man is like in the sight of God, what the race has come to. That men could bring Him to this shows what men are like. Here He is on the one hand representing the deplorable spiritual state to which sin has brought man, and He has entered into that in a kinship with all men - "Him who knew no sin he made sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21). He has entered into our deepest degradation, in order to be the redeeming kinsman. It is a wonderful change of scene from this man Whose visage is marred more than any man, to the Man in the glory or on the Mount of Transfiguration. All that shame and despicableness was necessary in order that He might bring us to this other; it was needful to bring the representative man to that dishonour in order that we

might be changed into the likeness of His glorious manhood. "Behold, the man!" What do you look at? It is a sorry and terrible picture of a man that is here. Was there ever service like that - to God, and to the race?

"Behold, the man!" - a man despised, rejected. But the prophet carries it further. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." That was the attitude of Job's friends. 'God has done this! This is what you deserve at the hands of God!' That was how man viewed it. A little later the prophet says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he (the Lord) hath put him to grief: ...thou (the Lord) shalt make his soul an offering for sin." The Lord brought Him down there in order to exalt us. He, as in His own manhood, touched the very depths of sin's outworking.

"The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That word 'iniquity' carries within its meaning an alliance with Satan. The iniquity of Israel was that they went into alliance with false gods and the gods of the heathen, which are demons. That is the great iniquity of Israel. "He hath laid on him the iniquity." See what Satan would do with the Son of God, how he would degrade Him! That is the work of the devil, and men have done it at his instigation; but, in the risen, ascended, glorified Christ, the deepest, direst work of Satan is destroyed by the Cross. That is service to God.

The King

"Behold, your King!" Again, Pilate, of course, was mocking; as far as a man in his predicament could, he was making a joke of it. "Behold, your King! ...Shall I crucify your King?" It is remarkable how the sovereignty of God is active, even behind a man's joke. There was far more truth in this than Pilate ever intended. "Your King!" Of course, with the Jews, Messiah and 'king' were synonymous terms. Their Messiah was to be king, and their king was to be Messiah. They were refusing Him as their Messiah, and therefore as their king. But note how Divine sovereignty transformed the Cross from what men intended it to be - the gibbet of a rejected Messiah - into the throne of a triumphant Christ. He does reign from His Cross, as you and I know. It is by the Cross that He has triumphed. It is by the Cross that He has gained His great ascendancy in our hearts and drawn from the nations through many generations men to worship Him as King. Pilate said, "Behold, your King!" and the Jews replied 'Crucify him! He is no king of ours!' But God saw to it that in that very hour He ascended a spiritual and moral throne which has shaken this universe to its utmost bounds. Through the door which was opened then and there we are able to look in the book of the Revelation, and we see in chapter 1 the Man; and then we see the Servant, the Lamb; then we see the King. "King of kings, and Lord of lords," yet the Lamb in the midst of the throne. The government, the throne, the kingship are held together from Calvary onward.

Well, that is servanthood, and service, so far as the Lord Jesus is concerned. I am not suggesting that we can serve in the same fullness and in the same way. We cannot serve atoningly, but we can serve in the same spirit; and service to God does involve the same principles - utter self-emptying, having nothing of our own, obedience even unto death, allowing ourselves to be marred and broken and humbled and despised;

but, blessed be God, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12). The Throne stands at the end of the way of the Cross.

Chapter 4 - Some Qualifications Basic to Service

Qualifications Not Natural but Spiritual

Timothy was a young man - it would seem that he was little more than a boy - when Paul first found him. In addition, he was of a very timid and shrinking disposition and temperament - anything but self-assertive and self-sufficient; he was one who could easily be put down by anyone who was assertive. Because of his youth and of his timid disposition he could easily be despised; and perhaps also because evidently he was not physically robust. "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" Paul later wrote to him (1 Tim. 5:23). Young, shrinking, timid, physically weak; yet the Apostle looked at him - and Paul was not one to act impulsively, without thought and care and discernment - and said, 'I want that lad with me.' Then we find that young man's name joined with the name of the great Apostle - may we not say, with the name of the greatest of the Apostles? Their names are joined in association in the superscription of both the letters to the Thessalonians, of the second letter to the Corinthians, of the letter to the Philippians, of the letter of the Colossians, and then there are two whole letters written by the Apostle to Timothy himself; so that Timothy was connected with each of the four groups of Paul's letters. Then, after Paul's release from the first imprisonment, Timothy is found with him going on a journey, and Paul leaves him at Ephesus in charge of the church there.

If you were seeking a 'call' - as it is termed today - to a church, for various reasons you would not have chosen Ephesus, especially if you knew your own weaknesses as Timothy knew his. But Paul put him there in charge of the church because there was very serious need; some very difficult situations needed dealing with. That is the church where Timothy had to set things in order, in accordance with all that the Apostle gave him in those two letters which he addressed to him there.

Why? If we look to see why Paul did it, we see no natural grounds at all to justify either the choosing of him in the first place or the appointing of him to that great responsibility. Paul must have seen something, however; and I think we are able to discern some of the things that accounted for it.

Devotion to the Lord

There is no doubt that one thing characterised Timothy, and that was genuine devotion to the Lord. That is the first thing - real devotion to the Lord. You see, there are tremendous possibilities where there is that foundation. There may be many deficiencies and weaknesses, but real devotion to the Lord is a ground upon which the Lord can build big things and do a great deal.

Energy in the Things of the Lord

Another thing about Timothy clearly was his energy; out of his devotion sprang his energy in the things of the Lord. I leave you to trace the life of Timothy from the day Paul took him away. See what Paul says about him, and see where he is and what he is

doing and everything else that you can trace, and you will find that what I am saying has plenty of support. He was not in any way slothful. Paul was at one time far away from him and in need, and he sent for him to come, and to bring with him the cloak and the parchments that Paul had left at Troas (2 Tim. 4:9-13): We can have no doubt that Timothy hastened to reach the Apostle as quickly as he could. There is this mark of the businesslike about Timothy, of real energy.

Unselfishness

I think another thing is perfectly clear - his absolute unselfishness (c.f. Phil. 2:19-22).

These three things amount to this - that Timothy, with all his natural handicaps and disadvantages, was a young man who meant to be no second-rate servant of the Lord. He was on stretch to be the fullest that it was possible for a man to be for God, and you know that it is remarkable and very true that the spiritual value of a man or a woman can more than make up for a great deal of natural lack. How often we have to say of someone, 'Well, there is this and there is that about them, they are not this and they are not that, and those features would really rule them out; but their spiritual value more than makes up for all that.' I am sure that is how it was with Timothy, and that is what Paul saw - that here was one who, from his conversion in early life, was utterly for God, who really meant business. There is no 'survival of the fittest' here. A young man like this - no natural leader: with these men at Ephesus trying to ride over his head (Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth"): with all that weakness and handicap - he is the man for the task, he is the man who is drawing out from the Apostle all that is in the two epistles written to him. How greatly a man with many limitations can count for the Church's good for many centuries to come because there are some things about him which entirely supersede all his natural limitations! I think that is the message here.

Greatness is a Matter of the Heart

If you look at it the other way round, there are plenty of people full of assumption and presumption who are always pushing themselves forward - always ready to be in the limelight, to do the talking, and so on - who are fairly sure of themselves and have no hesitation and certainly no shrinking, but you do not always find the real spiritual values there. Such people are self-sufficient. But, on the other hand, what we have been saying is a tremendously encouraging thing, because I suppose most of us feel that if the Lord were looking for a good and capable servant we should not expect Him to look in our direction; and yet, you see, "The Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7), and if He really sees that we mean business, that there is a selfless devotion to Himself, and real energy, these things will count with Him; they give Him ground upon which He can build, and He will act accordingly.

If all that we have said of Timothy as to his natural disqualifications were true, and if Paul had been looking for the naturally robust type, he would not have looked a second time in Timothy's direction; he would have said, 'That will let me down.' But no; it comes about that this young man of whom these things are evidently true, who does

need a good deal of encouragement, support, reassuring, nevertheless for some reasons - there are reasons for it - becomes in this way, for all time, linked with the great Apostle Paul. Do you not think that it is remarkable that Paul should link Timothy's name with his like that? "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus..." It says something very encouraging - that there are certain things which make a tremendous amount possible with the Lord, but when you look to see what those things are, there is not necessarily anything natural at all. It is purely spiritual value. Anything is possible when the Lord has in us spiritual measure. It outweighs everything else.

Chapter 5 - Faith's Persistence: A Factor in the Making of a Servant

Reading: 1 Kings 18:41-44

In this small fragment we have crowded two of the major things in the spiritual life and experience of the people of God. One is the fact of the seemingly slow and hidden ways of God; the other is the demand for faith to be found in His servants. It is not my intention at the moment to enlarge much upon the former. You will know quite well how much there is in the Bible about it. You have only to look into the Psalms, and you will find again and again the Psalmist crying out because of the seemingly slow response, or the entire absence of any response, from God. "O God, why hast thou cast us off?" (Psa. 74:1). Whole Psalms are given up to that problem, and in many other places we find the same thing. In our own spiritual experience it is very true that not least among our trials is this same one - that God is so slow in His response, so hidden in His answers; often it would appear that He is almost indifferent or careless; and that is here in this little fragment. I think we shall be convinced of that before we are through, but for the moment we mention it and dismiss it, having just one object in saying anything about it at all, and that is that we might again recognise that this is a very common experience amongst even the greatest and most devoted of the servants of God. It is not the experience alone of the novices, of the ordinary people. It has been the experience of the most outstanding of God's servants through all the ages; they have been confronted with this problem. The Lord does seem to be slow and not at all anxious to respond; though to His people the situation may seem to be exceedingly critical.

The Critical Issue

The second thing is that upon which I want to concentrate for these few moments - the demand for faith's persistence in God's people. This in a sense was the most critical point of the whole chapter. It might be thought that the most critical point was when the prophets of Baal had exhausted themselves without any response, and Elijah, having built the altar of Israel and saturated it with water and filled the trench, called upon the Lord. We might say this is a breathless moment, everything depends upon what happens now. Perhaps it is true that was the high point of the story; but, after all, supposing it had stopped there! Three years of drought, with all their disastrous consequences, involving the whole question of the possibility of the continuation of life at all - that was all gathered into the moment when the rain began to fall; and, although the people had cried, "The Lord, he is God," if the rain had not come it would have been easy for them to say that some magic had been performed in the bringing down of the fire, and that they were none the better for it all. So there is a sense in which the real crisis is at this point - rain, new life, new prospect, new hope, new possibility; all the rest goes for nothing if the rain does not come.

God's Seeming Indifference

How critical, then, was this moment! and the Lord knew how critical it was. It might well have been thought, 'Well, the people have now turned from Baal, they have cried, "The Lord, he is God," it seems that the great reformation has been completed. That issue is settled; surely the Lord can send the rain now. The heavens ought at once to be filled with clouds.' But it was not so, and, while the prophet was quite assured in his own heart and gave words of assurance, he went up higher in the same mount of crisis, and before God, with his head between his knees, began to pray the supreme issue through. James tells us "Elijah was a man of like passions (infirmities) with us, and he prayed fervently (he prayed with prayer)," implying something very, very strenuous and definite, something more than ordinary praying - and even so he had to hold on and on and on. It seems that God is slow, even in the presence of the greatest crisis, the most serious situation. Why this?

Well, I think it relates to this anonymous servant, and, in relating to him, it is something for all time. I call him an anonymous servant, because we do not know who he is or where he came from. Evidently Elijah had a servant, though very little is known of him. In the record of Elijah at the brook Cherith, and at Zarephath, no mention is made of a servant; and later, when Elisha joins Elijah, it is stated that "they two went on," implying the absence of any other. But at the point of the story which we are now considering mention is made of a servant, though not by name. This man just comes like that, without name. Being anonymous, he seems to represent the principle of service, and, if that is true, we can understand at least a good deal of the meaning of this strange episode, the seeming delay of God. The battle had been fought through, a mighty victory had been secured, they knew that the issue was in hand, and yet, and yet, something had got to be done.

A Warning against Complacency

Here in the first place is a very serious warning against anything in the nature of complacency, even after we have poured ourselves out and been assured that we have got through. The principle or spirit of service is gathered up surely into this, that there is a persistence of faith which is the very essence of true service or servanthood. You will not find in the whole Bible any servant of God of account, of value, who did not need to have developed in him this persistence of faith. Here is this servant. The next servant who comes into view is Elisha, and after his call the one recorded phase of his association with Elijah is that which precedes the taking up of Elijah into heaven. Elijah said unto Elisha, "Tarry here... the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel" (2 Kings 2:2). Stage by stage, "Tarry here..."; "tarry here..."; but Elisha would not have it. He said, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At last the whole issue was gathered up into that request of Elisha for a double portion of his master's spirit, and Elijah's response, "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." It was the element of persistence that was brought into view.

Now, if you analyse this, you will see that there had been a tremendous thing done. They had got through on Carmel, they had reached a place of very real consequence.

We might think that they would have been perfectly justified in saying, 'Now, that is done; now we will wait to see the Lord working it all out; it is His matter, so we will fold our arms and see Him do it.' If you had gone through the ordeal that Elijah had gone through and seen that tremendous thing, and felt that assurance that the end was reached, would you not have felt justified in speaking like that? And yet Elijah went higher up into the mount. "Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel" - to pray. Something more had to be done to see this thing through to the final issue.

The Persistence of Faith

Then comes in this servant. "Go up" - still higher. There is still something more to be done in exercise. "Look toward the sea." He went up and came back. "There is nothing!" After all, nothing is happening. After all that battle, after all that conflict, after all that prayer, all that exercise, all that exhausting ordeal, laying hold of God and getting something of an inward witness that it is all right - after all, nothing happening! Have you ever been there? It is like an anticlimax. "There is nothing." Oh, that is the most perilous point! Everything can collapse there! The tremendous reaction that can set in there! After all, there is nothing. We are just where we were, despite all that we have done and endured.

What are you going to do? Well, one of two things. Either you will say, 'After all, somehow or other, it has all been an illusion.' You know that sort of thing - a counsel of despair; paralysed by the seeming unresponsiveness of the Lord. Or there is the other side. "Go again seven times." "There is nothing." A second time - "there is nothing." A third time - "there is nothing." A fourth time "there is *nothing*." I try to imagine what the servant's voice was getting like as he went on toward the sixth time. I am not sure that he did not add a few words! 'What is the good of it all - there is nothing; I told you there is nothing!' It could be like that: that is human nature. 'I do not see the use of going right up there again, I am tired of this business, there is nothing.' "Go again seven times." The seventh time - what? A cloud as small as a man's hand. In the vast heavens, a cloud the size of a man's hand! That is all. God is doing a very deep thing. He is carrying this matter of faith's persistence a long way. You need not interpret the number seven literally, but there has to be a rounding off in spiritual perfection in this matter of faith's persistence. The issue broke; it broke only in something very small. That small thing is just a token, it is not the whole. But the token was given, and Elijah says, "Go up, say unto Ahab, Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not" - the token is taken as the whole. "Now faith is... the title deeds of things unseen" (Heb. 11:1) - the token of the whole. And as they went, the heavens were full of clouds.

A Quality Inwrought into the Servant

I think the message is clear. It is so easy to make a big start, with a good deal of strength and shouting and activity, thinking that something is going to happen, that the Lord is going to come right in and do some big thing. Then it does not happen, the Lord

does not do as we expected, and then our prayer begins to lessen, our spiritual diligence to wane. All that zeal and energy and devotion which marked us at one time is declining. The Lord is not fulfilling our expectations. But what is He doing? He is making a servant. You go into the service of God and think you are going to get quick returns and instant interventions of God from heaven in difficult situations; you look for the immediate response to your cry, especially in what seems to you to be the most critical situation; you expect that; and because you do not get it, are you going to fade out and give up and lose your zeal? No true servant of God has ever known it to be like that. The real servant, the useful servant, is the one who persists in faith - a persistence that is demanded even when interests that are clearly the Lord's are at stake. "The Lord, he is God." God had to vindicate that again, not this time in the fire, but in the water, in the rain; not only in the passing of judgment but in the maintaining of life; not only in the death, but in the resurrection. But it is sometimes the most testing thing for a servant of God to believe that God's strange behaviour really does not mean that God is indifferent about His own name. Do you grasp that? His delays, His hiddenness, His strange, seeming indifference - does it imply that He is not as concerned about His name as we are? The true servant has to learn otherwise. God is making a servant, and in so doing He sometimes does appear to be indifferent, slow. Faith's persistence is required to "seven times" persistence right through to completion. God may test us. We are not to sit down. There has to be a persisting in faith, and holding on for the issue. God is more concerned about the constitution of His servants on true Divine principles than He is about the doing of things by way of demonstrating His power. God can demonstrate His power if He wants to. But no, He has to work into the very constitution of His people that faith which can hold on, stand fast, even against His own seeming indifference. And in the end the rain came in abundance; all knew about the rain. But there was a double battle. There was the battle first with Baal, and then with inward unbelief - the battle of self; the outside and the inside battle; and very often the whole issue hangs upon the battle within.

Chapter 6 - The Servant's Hands

"Moses put of the blood... upon the thumb of their right hand" (Lev. 8:24).

"If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off" (Matt. 5:30).

"Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities" (Acts 20:34).

"We toil, working with our own hands" (1 Cor. 4:12).

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands..." (Eph. 4:28).

Manual Work Not Inconsistent with Spirituality

There is a literal and there is a symbolic application of this word. We can clearly see the literal side from the words of Paul as to himself and in what he said to the Corinthians and the Ephesians; and he said that in this matter he gave them an example. It is something to note that this one who was so very thorough-going in his adverse handling of believers before his conversion, who persecuted the Church and cast the believers into prison, is now seen to be the one who has got his hands converted as well as his heart, and is using his hands so thoroughly for the good of the Church, on behalf of the Lord's people. It is impressive that this servant of God who, after the Lord Jesus, was surely the greatest of the dispensation, did not cloister himself with his knowledge, his revelation, and cut himself off from the practical things of daily life, but went forth, and even laboured with his hands in the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

That must convey its own message to our hearts, showing quite clearly for one thing that, if such a man will do that kind of thing, there is a dignity about the menial tasks of the daily round with which the hands are occupied. All can be lifted on to the very high level of a true spiritual ministry. That is very simple.

Consecrated Hands Full for the Lord

Now it represents of course a definite act of consecration. Just as with Aaron and his sons the right hand was definitely and precisely touched with the blood, implying that what the hand represented was now consecrated to the Lord; that is, all the activities of life were for the Lord by a definite and precise act of consecration; so Paul says "Present your members...", "Present your bodies..." (Romans 6:19; 12:1). It is something deliberately done - the whole of our bodies, represented by the right hand, are placed on that physical, active, practical basis of service to the Lord. It is to be remembered that the very word 'consecrate' means to fill the hands and there is no doubt about it that Paul's hands were full; they were consecrated hands in that sense; they were full for the Lord.

Hands Express Inner Disposition

Now that leads to the symbolic significance of hands in the Word of God. They are the symbols of the person. How often we can discern and recognize the hidden personality

by a gesture! Very often the whole of the inner life is betrayed thereby. You know what is going on inside, what is being felt and thought, by a gesture of the hands. We need not follow that very closely, but it is quite true. The hand is a symbol of the inner person. And in the Scriptures, it is always taken as signifying whether a person is diligent or otherwise. We speak of willing hands, but what we really mean is that the hands are the exhibition of an inner willingness. Unwilling hands reveal that there is lacking inwardly a diligence, a willingness. The kind of hands reveals the state inside; it is the spirit of the person. So when the Lord says, "If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off," He is not speaking literally at all: it is symbolic language. You do not do any moral good to yourself by cutting off a hand literally. You do not change your disposition. The cause of stumbling is what prompts your hand to act, what lies behind the hand. To cut off the hand really means to get behind the hand to what was the cause of the act, and to deal with that. You can run through the Scriptures and see how much there is everywhere about the using of hands as indicating the state of the life within.

Now look at the Lord Jesus. Just run your eye over the Gospel by Mark, having in mind the hands of Jesus, and see His hands actually at work. You know 'Mark' is the Gospel of the Servant, and here He is, everywhere and continuously using His hands in His ministry, signifying that here is the true servant spirit; eager, consecrated hands full, showing something of the Spirit that is in Him.

In His case, and in the case of Paul, you find that the hands are the symbols of the spirit of service, and, indeed, of an overflow of that spirit, for there is never any need to point out to them that something should be done, that something is called for; they are at it day and night. Such is the spirit that is in them.

Everything to be Done as Unto the Lord

Well, the Lord says, Let the Blood be upon your hand - that is, separating it from all work that is unworthy of the Lord, all that belongs to self-interest, and separating it, consecrating it to God that it shall be a hand full for HIM. Remember that Paul used his hands in making tents for the support of himself and of those who were with him, and to spare the saints embarrassment. My point is this, that Paul would never have said, 'Oh, to serve the Lord you must, of course, regard all that sort of thing as belonging to another realm; making tents, washing dishes, cleaning floors, digging gardens, that is not the spiritual realm; if you are going to serve the Lord, you must have your Bible in your hand all the time and be talking.' No, Paul would not allow that division. He recognized the tremendous importance of making everything the opportunity for spiritual purposes, and he saw that ordinary, daily work could be a channel, a vehicle, of serving the Lord. So may the Lord have our hands in this sense - that He has in us a spirit of unreserved abandonment to His interests along any line in which He can be served.

"WHATSOEVER thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccles. 9:10)

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31)

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17)

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, work heartily, as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23)

Chapter 7 - The Testing of Self-Interest in the Servant

Reading: 1 Kings 18:36-40; 19:2-5,9,15-16; Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 3:1-6; 11:2-14; 14:3.

Elijah and John the Baptist are in view in these passages of Scripture, and much for our help can be learned from their experiences.

A Vital Ministry in a Time of Transition

In the first place, we must take account of their ministries. The two men are brought together in a mysterious identification by the Lord Jesus, and from various fragments it is quite clear that their ministries were one in principle and nature; that is, in a day of fairly general spiritual smallness and weakness, these two servants of God were His instrument and vessel for making a way and a place for Himself in greater fullness. They were way-makers for the Lord, pioneers and pathfinders for His larger purposes and desires. In the familiar words used by John - "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). That was the key to the ministry of both Elijah and John the Baptist - the increase of the Lord amongst His people.

Both lived in a time of transition. The principle of transition is clear, firstly, in that Elijah is brought over into full view at the very end of Malachi's prophecies, at the close of the Old Testament - an end-time, a period of transition unto the Lord's coming: in that case, of course, His first coming. But I do not think that what the Lord said about Elijah, in Malachi and later, was exhausted by the first coming of the Lord; the great and terrible day of the Lord is still to come. We will not enlarge too much on details, but be content to note that that time of transition was governed by the ministry of both these men, and was marked by the gathering out of a real people from among the professing people of the Lord. Malachi makes that perfectly clear - "*Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I do make*" (Mal. 3:16-17). Out from the professing, religious realm there is seen in these words to be a true people for the Lord. Undoubtedly that was the mark of John's ministry, for tradition, formalism, legalism were the dominant features of religion in his day, and it was against these that he hurled his weight to secure a people unto Christ in fullness, in utterness. He sought a transition from one spiritual state to another, and, in the light of a change of dispensation, to secure a people wholly for the Lord. That wants dwelling upon very much more fully, but I think that is enough to give us the clue to the ministry of these men, and to relate them in a vital way to our own day - another end-time, transition period that is surely ushering in another coming of the Lord, and that also is characterised by the need for the gathering out of a real people from among those who profess to be the Lord's. We may expect that what was true in the experience of Elijah and John in their day will in principle be found in God's dealings with instruments of His choice today.

Preparation in Secret

It becomes clear then that for such a great purpose - to make a way and to make room for the Lord - God had and has His instruments, known to Himself, and secretly under His hand, being prepared. Elijah comes on to the scene mysteriously, almost out of nowhere, after deep secret preparation and discipline. John has spent all his life in the wilderness waiting for the day of his appearing to Israel. Something has been going on in secret. God has had these men in hand in deep preparation, vessels to meet this particular need in the time of transition - transition from a state which the Lord can no longer accept as answering to His known will, to a state which will satisfy Him. He must have a vessel for such a purpose. It may be individuals, as it often is, but it has also through the ages proved to be a corporate vessel, a company of the Lord's people prepared in this way. These instruments, known and secured by God in secret, have, in a secret history with Him, been learning to know the Lord as their heavenly sustenance. Elijah, at a time when earth could not provide any sustenance, was sustained from heaven. John the Baptist, in the wilderness for many years, where he had to know the Lord in loneliness and apart from men, was having to learn the Lord as his heavenly life and his heavenly provision. Such is the preparation, the equipment, of any vessel to serve God in this greater purpose of His heart.

All Prone to Variable Soul Emotions

Then we come to the next phase - the heights and the depths. We see Elijah at Carmel, not only literally on a height, but spiritually in great eminence, with an open heaven and the power of God being manifested - people being bowed under those sovereign activities of the Lord, a tremendous time of life and of fullness. And then we see him fleeing for his very life at the threat of a woman, casting himself down under a juniper tree, saying, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." "I am an utter failure; let me die." From the heights to the depths!

John the Baptist - what a day his was! He, by revelation from heaven, had said, "Behold, the Lamb of God... He that sent me... said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:29,33-34). And then we read his troubled enquiry, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. 11:3). Again, from the heights to the depths!

There are many lessons in that. Great spiritual heights where you are enjoying the Lord, in real fellowship with Him, and where there is a large measure of spiritual fullness, followed within a very brief time by the feeling that it is no longer worth living, that everything is gone, and major questions are arising about the very things upon which you were before most positive, about which you would have allowed no contradiction - your own heart asking questions about it all, about your very life-work and the worthwhileness of your existence, whether you have not been altogether mistaken, whether it has not been a great illusion. It is a tremendous thing to observe this change in two such men as these. Well might James say, "Elijah was a man of like passions with us" (James 5:17)!

The first thing to be noted from this is that there are times when we come into experiences of barrenness, of a seemingly closed heaven, and no longer the enjoyment of the consciousness of the Lord's presence and of spiritual blessing. There are times like that in the life of the greatest servants and instruments that God has ever used. It is as well for us to recognize it. Some of us would not range ourselves alongside of these men as to our spiritual stature, but if they went that way, should we expect anything else?

Fluctuating Soul Emotions to be Repudiated

The next thing to note is that every instrument, however greatly owned and used of God, is, after all, utterly dependent upon Him. What a proof it is that our resource is the Lord and not ourselves! We are nothing in ourselves. If only we would really remember, that although the Lord may have called us and used us and made us know quite well that He has apprehended us, in ourselves we can drop down to the depths of despair. If we go into ourselves, that is how it can be. If we sink down into our souls - our feelings, our reactions to situations, our appraisals, our judgments of how things appear, of what seems to be - if we get down there and begin to look from the earthly standpoint, from the merely human angle, that is how we can be and shall be. It is for you and for me at all such times to say, 'Now, after all, is this myself or is this the Lord? Is this just because I have got down into my own soul?' We have to challenge ourselves as to ourselves. David was always doing that. It looks to me as though David was constantly taking himself into a corner and looking himself in the face, so to speak, and talking to himself. On one occasion he was pouring out a terrible complaint, and then he said to himself, "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Psa. 77:10). 'This is how I am made, and what I am like, but this is not the Lord.'

Well, there are times when we have to pass through spiritual experiences like this. There is no guarantee that we shall not have them. The Lord allows them for us to learn from them - mainly to learn how unreliable are our own souls, so that we come to repudiate our own moods and all that belongs to that soul realm. In such times of suspense and of seeming emptiness, when all has gone into unreality, we learn what it is that we are really resting upon spiritually. The Lord is now working into us the principles of our testimony. We have borne a testimony, and now is the time to have the principles of it wrought in and wrought out; and that takes place in times like these when we are no longer on the mountain, but down in the valley. Now what about the principles of your testimony - not the things you said, the profession you made, but the actual principles of that testimony?

The Lord Does Not Meet Us on Soul Ground

I must close with a word as to the Lord's way with His sorely tried servants. How did He come to their rescue? Now note - neither in the case of Elijah nor of John the Baptist did the Lord make a lot of them personally. He did not meet them on their soul ground. He does not do that. We get down into our souls, become the prisoners of appearances

and feelings, and the Lord never comes there to us and takes our ground. He says, "What doest thou here?" We have got to get up, we have got to get on our feet again. We may be quite sure He is full of sympathy - the story of Elijah reveals the Lord's tender care for His servant - and yet He cannot condone and accept that level and realm which we have taken, and He will not make a great deal of us personally; we must not expect that He is going to do it. He did not say to Elijah, 'Oh, Elijah, you are all wrong; after all, you are a great man, you are much better than your fathers.' And He did not say anything like that to John the Baptist. What He had to say about John - how great a man he was - He said to the people when even John's disciples had gone. He did not say *to John*, 'There hath not arisen a greater than you'; but He did say it of John to others. The Lord is not going to pat us on the back.

What did the Lord do in both cases? Well, in effect, He said, 'Elijah, the work is going on; now then, is it yourself or the work you are concerned about? Elijah, go and anoint Elisha!' Oh, what a new prospect came in with Elisha! - a transferred ministry. If Elijah had been caring only for himself, he would have felt jealous, piqued. But no, he went on his way and did it. And to John the Baptist - 'John, the work is going on; you have said you must decrease and I must increase. I am going on with the work, John. You may be put aside out of it, but I am not giving up the work. I am going on with the purpose that I started.' It tests us as to our utter selflessness. It puts us on the right basis. It is a tremendous thing, if really our hearts are in the work. The Lord says, 'You may be having a bad time, you may feel you have come to an end - but *I* have not; I have a Jehu yet, I have an Elisha yet, I have the kingdom yet that you, John, have talked about. I am going on.' You see the point. The Lord has not abandoned His work. We may be having a bad time, but the Lord is not giving up, He is going on with the thing which He has taken in hand; and while you and I may not at the end be beheaded like John, the principles are these, and we shall only be able to come back into line with the Lord's going if a new severance from self-interest takes place, and if we are concerned only with the Lord's interests. But remember that the Lord snapped His fingers at Jezebel. Remember her end, and Herod's end; and see Elijah and John the Baptist as spiritual forces going on through the ages, and speaking to us today.

Chapter 8 - The Spirit of the Bondservant

Readings: Matt. 20:25-28; John 13:16; Luke 19:17; Phil. 2:7-8; 2 Tim. 2:20-21.

These passages all bear upon the matter of service, and they deal with service from centre to circumference; that is, right at the centre in the matter of service the Lord Jesus Himself is placed. He took the place and the form of a bondservant, and He said of Himself: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many". So that the Master is presented to us as the chief Servant, as the exemplary Servant, the very model Servant and the model of service.

It is not so much the service as the spirit of the Servant that we want to consider at this time, not mainly the work, but the atmosphere of Him Who did it. It is something to contemplate and to meditate upon. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister" is a tremendous statement. The ministry of the Son of man is not that of an official, but of a bondservant. On more than one occasion He sought to impress upon His disciples that their lives here were on the same basis, and were to be governed by exactly the same spirit. They were here to be servants, and servants of all.

If you knew what that word "bondservant" meant in the realm where it was the common language, you would know that it was a very strong word. It certainly did not mean that the one who was in that position could consult his own preferences, and do as he liked or desired. There could never be any consultation with self. The bondslave had no rights whatever in the realm of what was personal to himself. The very fact that he was a bondslave meant that all his own personal rights were removed. He was possessed for a purpose - it may have been (as was usual) to serve a household - and for that household he must live, and never consult his own feelings or interests. The Lord Jesus said that He took that position.

Probably if we had looked at the face of the common bondslave of those days, we should have seen the depressed, joyless countenance of one who had very little interest in life. But that was not so with the One Who presented Himself as the chief of the bondslaves, the Lord Jesus; that is, this position of His did not mean that because He could not consult His own interests or feelings He was miserable, and life had very little meaning for Him. The spirit of this Bondslave was the spirit of joyous, glad and grateful abandonment. To be cut off from Himself and all that would please Himself meant no hardship, because He was always viewing it from the positive side, and not from the negative - from the side of gain to others and the satisfaction to the One Whose Servant He was.

The Governing Motive of Service

That introduces the governing motive of service. What is the governing motive of the bondslave of Jesus Christ? It is not compulsion, it is not option; it is love. No ministry of the servant of Jesus Christ can be a triumphant ministry unless there is a deep, strong, abiding love. Love is the motive force of this kind of service. There is all the difference between that and what is official, by appointment - what we call organised work and

service. Sooner or later we shall break down, find ourselves brought to a standstill where we can go no further, in a terrible state of confusion about the whole situation, unless there is an adequate love, not only for the Lord but for all those in the midst of whom we are called to serve. Love is going to solve our problems and to bring us into victory; but apart from a sufficient love the problems of human make-up, the many differences of disposition and character and all that goes to make up a company, and the continuous drain and strain, with all the pressure that comes from the enemy, will present a problem, a perplexity and a paralysing task. Only love will get us through, and love is the motive-power of the servant.

We may ask, How did the Lord manage to maintain the relationship with His disciples? They were so difficult, so different, so disappointing. "Having loved his own... he loved them unto the end". That is the answer. Love got above all that they were; love gave the extra thing which enabled Him not to take them just as they were and end there.

So in our relationships, the spirit of the true servant is only possible as there is a deep love. Upon all those who have ideas of serving the Lord and working for Him I would urge this consideration, that the work of the Lord is not some thing which you outwardly and objectively take up. It is (if it is the true thing) the outworking of love for the Lord and for those who are the objects of His love. That is very simple, but it goes to the heart of things. Sooner or later you and I will be brought to the position where the question will be, Have we sufficient love to go on? Can we find enough love in our hearts to get us through this particularly difficult situation? The situation will be constituted by all those factors which resolve us into servants, bondslaves. It would not have become so acute if only we had been esteemed and honoured, and held in high regard. But when the situation is created by a great deal being expected of us, by demands being made upon our generosity, our kindness, calling for an almost inexhaustible fund of patience, and the letting go of personal feeling; when really the main issue in the crisis is this - I am being imposed upon: too much is being expected of me: I am treated as a servant - that is where we are found out. Love alone can support this service. We all need a great deal more love to get through with our servanthood.

Love Includes Humility

Love embraces other things. He took "the form of a bondservant... and... humbled himself". To be a true servant according to Jesus Christ means humility. The exact opposite of the servant spirit is the spirit of pride, and there is that in most men and women which at some time or other is discovered and manifests itself, which does not like to be regarded as a servant. There is a revolt against being a servant, at everybody's beck and call. Liberty! Freedom! Do as you like! Be your own master! State your own terms! To let go all such personal rights, to be a servant, is not human nature as we know it. "He humbled himself." There is no place for pride in a true fellowship with the Lord Jesus, because it is the fellowship of bondslaves. Pride keeps many people out of the kingdom of God. They will not humble themselves to acknowledge that they are needy sinners. They will not come to the place where they would be

publicly recognised as one of those Christians! Pride keeps them out. Pride will take them to hell, just as it took Satan from heaven to hell. Pride is the enemy of believers as much as of the unsaved. It robs us of the real value of service. We have such stilted ideas of service. We do not mind being in the Lord's service if it means something that brings us recognition. There are tremendous dangers about recognised service. The Lord Jesus humbled Himself.

Love Includes Faithfulness

What is the way of increased and added usefulness? In the parable of our Lord we read that it was said to the servant: "Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17). Does not that often find us out? Our bit is not important enough! It does not seem to count very much! It is so small as hardly to be worth notice! "...thou wast found faithful in a very little..." Does that fit you? Do you say, 'Yes, "very little", that truly is my position.' Do you see that you are in the very place where the Master takes account of your faithfulness, with a view to increasing your usefulness? Do believe it! Whether you feel you can accept it or not it is true, that you will never be given an enlarged usefulness by the Lord until you have been faithful in the very little. You may take it that if the Lord promotes He always does so because He takes account of the faithfulness in the very little. The thing that matters is not what people think about us as servants but our attitude to what the Lord has given us to do. If He has said: 'This is what I want you to do...', and then He can go on and say 'And this!' 'And this!', adding to our responsibilities, it will always be on that principle of our being faithful in a very little. We are in the school which has higher standards, larger possibilities.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). That is another aspect. "...a vessel unto honour... meet... prepared unto *every* good work". On what condition? "If a man... purge himself from these..." From what? "Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honour, and some unto dishonour". Our translation is defective. It does not really say that in the original. It is difficult to put it into one English word. It really says, There are vessels unto honour and there are vessels not unto honour (not dishonour). The Lord has not in His House vessels unto dishonour in that positive sense. All His vessels that He has chosen are for good purposes, but there are differences. There are some unto honour, there are some not unto that honour. It is possible to be a vessel unto honour, by separating, by sanctifying, by consecrating, so that it is something more than just an ordinary vessel without any noteworthy purpose. It is a matter of being wholly consecrated to the Lord. That is the principle of honour and meet-ness for use and being prepared unto every good work. It is the positive side - not just being in the House without any special feature or character, but a vessel there right out for the Lord, as we say. These two kinds of vessels are there - those which are just there, really featureless vessels, not marked by any real value, and the

others which are wholly devoted, wholly consecrated, stretched out to be all they can for the Lord.

The Basis is the Cross

The basis of all this is the Cross: "...and to give his life..." He became obedient unto death, the death of the Cross. This love can only spring out of a heart in which the flesh has been dealt with by the Cross. The self life must go to the Cross. This patience, this humility, this devotion, this love is all the out-working of a crucified life, a life which from the beginning has come to the Cross and abides there.

The Lord give us the spirit of the servant, and may there in the future be about us all more of that which was about Him - "not to be ministered unto but to minister." That is what we are here for. Demands - constant and ever growing demands! That is what we are here for. Being imposed upon! Never allowed to have a position of our own! Put it that way if you like; but what we are here for is to serve. We are bondslaves. The day of exaltation and glory is coming, it is not now. There will be a change some day: "...have thou authority..." But just now we are the bondslaves of Jesus Christ. May we be that in truth.

Chapter 9 - Service and Sovereignty

Reading: Jeremiah 1:1-12

Our meditation is to be on the matter of service and sovereignty, and I think I can best say what is on my heart by dividing that in this way - (1) The Service, (2) The Servant, (3) The Sovereignty.

The Service

First, then, the service. When we come to consider any of the great servants of the Lord in the Bible, it would be very natural for us to react in this way - that they were raised up in a very special and outstanding way by God to fulfil a great historic purpose in the course of spiritual history, that they stand alone, in a unique position, and that for us in any way to place ourselves alongside of them or in the same category would be sheer presumption. There is a sense, of course, in which that is a right reaction. It would be quite wrong if we were to assume that we were anything like these men in their measure and ministry. At the same time, there are those things of spiritual meaning which are common to all service for the Lord. There are spiritual truths and principles which govern every one, the very least of the Lord's servants in common with the greatest; and what I shall have to say will be in connection with that which is as true of you and of me in principle as it was of Jeremiah or of any other outstanding servant of the Lord.

But of course we do have to allow for differences in the particular aspect of the service of the Lord to which we may be called. This service for which Jeremiah was chosen and raised up was perhaps the most difficult form of service ever given to man to fulfil. It is comparatively easy to preach the 'good news' of the grace of God to the unsaved, as compared with ministering the full thoughts of God to His own people who are away from those thoughts and are proudly ignorant of what those thoughts are - proud of their tradition, their past, their history; proud of the position to which they have come as something on this earth, fixed in a religious mould, spiritually blind and ignorant, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, having a name to live and yet being dead. To come to such a people in the deadly formality of their religious routine and to seek to show the fuller thoughts of God is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks ever committed to man. If there is one thing which comes out quite clearly in the story recorded in these prophecies of Jeremiah, it is how intensely difficult it is to fulfil a ministry like that.

To get some idea of how strong a situation Jeremiah had to meet in that formalism and spiritual death, let us remind ourselves that Isaiah had fulfilled his ministry, and less than a hundred years before this had been slain by the very fathers of the people to whom Jeremiah was sent. If tradition is right and the fragment in Hebrews 11:37 applies to Isaiah, he was "sawn asunder". What a great prophet he was! What a wonderful ministry he fulfilled! What a lot the people of God owe to that ministry! Nevertheless he had suffered thus at the hands of the people: his ministry had had that effect: suggesting that it was a fairly strong situation that Jeremiah had to meet. Then,

of course, men like Hosea, Amos, and Micah had long since finished their ministry, and when you remember all that they had to say and still you find this condition which is met in the prophecies of Jeremiah, you must conclude that if all those men had failed there must be something present that would make the stoutest heart faint at the contemplation of having to deal with it. That is the background of Jeremiah's ministry, and in such discouraging conditions he stepped forth to utter among that people the fuller thoughts of God concerning them.

That was the service to which this man was called, and whether it touches us or not will depend upon whether we have any real concern that the people of God, and all who come to know the Lord, shall come into the fullness of the Divine purpose and thought for His own people. The temptation is not infrequently present to leave the people of God just where they are, and write them off as either hopeless or not needing our attention. 'Let us get on with the business, of getting people saved. The state of the Lord's people is so confused and so deadly that we had better leave it and turn aside and start on fresh ground somewhere else.' There is something behind a temptation and argument of that kind when you really come up against a situation like this. But here again the Lord did not take that course, nor does He ever take it. He could have fully and finally renounced the whole thing, and started on altogether virgin soil; but no, if God has committed Himself, then whatever He may have to do, He will at last get, even if in a remnant only, an expression of that which is more fully according to His original mind.

But to that service and ministry can come only such as are going to know nothing less than a life-long crucifixion to all interests but that one thing - that God may be satisfied. So much, then, for the service.

The Servant

As to the servant; when the word of the Lord came to him Jeremiah was evidently not a novice, not just a youth; he was already of the priestly house and doubtless had some experience on the practical side of temple service; he knew something. But when it came to preaching - that is, to being a prophet to the people and to the nation - he felt himself altogether unqualified; indeed, he would have said, disqualified; and his instant reaction to the call of the Lord was, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I know not how to speak, for I am a child". The word 'child' there does not necessarily imply what we commonly take it to mean. It is the same word that the angel applied to Zechariah - "Speak to this young man" (Zech. 2:4). Jeremiah said, "I am a child" - 'I am young: in this realm of things, I have neither experience nor qualification'. But it was just there that the Lord found his qualification, not his disqualification.

Now, we must be very careful to make a discrimination. We find the Lord urging to service, calling for labourers; He wants prophets, He calls for servants, and desires them to be tremendously eager, earnest, zealous. But at the same time He wants to find in them a very real hesitancy - something which would say, 'I cannot'. How are we going to reconcile these two things? Until we have done that, we shall make some mistakes and be in a dangerous position. You see, there is all the difference between a

passion for souls and a passion for preaching. A great concern for the spiritual life of others is one thing; but a great concern to be teaching others is quite another thing. No one would ever say of Jeremiah that he was not stirred to the very depths of his being with a great concern and passion over the people of God. He has come down in history by the name of the weeping prophet. You cannot read his 'Lamentations' without feeling that this man, to the last drop of his blood, is impassioned over the spiritual state of God's people. At the same time, with it all he is hesitant, he would hold back. Those two things must be found together in the servant of the Lord, whatever the service. There must be on the one hand a deep-rooted passion and fire of spiritual concern over the situation which exists and which has to be met and dealt with; at the same time there must be just as deep a consciousness of the utter unfitness for such work on the part of the servant or the vessel himself or herself. Our eagerness to preach may, after all, actually spring from our own self-sufficiency, our own conceit, and in the sight of God that is the greatest disqualification for service. Our disqualification does not consist in our own inability and insufficiency but in our own idea that we *can*. Anything in the nature of conceit, which simply means, having the resource in ourselves, disqualifies in the sight of God.

Jeremiah was a priest by birth, by training, by upbringing, but he was no ecclesiastic, he was no professional priest; in the right sense he was a very natural man. Read his prophecies, keeping him in view with the object of seeing what kind of a person this is that you are dealing with in Jeremiah. How human he is! There is nothing put on, nothing in the nature of professional service. He would repudiate all titles. If he had been a dignified ecclesiastic, it would have been an awful thing to be treated as he was. Just imagine such a person being let down into the filth of that pit, and, after being left there for a time pulled up with the aid of filthy rags! Ecclesiastical dignity would not have stood up to that! But it was otherwise with Jeremiah. And God is wanting *people* - not professionals, not experts; just people. And that comes out here beautifully, right at the beginning. "Ah, Lord God... I know not how to speak; for I am a child." But the Lord knew something more about Jeremiah than he knew about himself.

The Sovereignty

Now we pass on to this which, after all, is the thing that I feel most constrained to say - a word about the sovereignty behind all this. Jeremiah was to minister regarding sovereignty, for it was the sovereignty of God that was in operation at this time in so many and such manifest ways. Perhaps the outstanding example of that comes in chapter 18 of these prophecies - the story of the potter's house and the vessel. "I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord". 'Have not I sovereign rights to do as I will? If the house of Israel fail me, then out of that clay I will make another vessel'. This is the operation of sovereignty. Jeremiah all the way through was to be a minister concerning the

sovereignty; therefore he had to be the personal embodiment of that sovereignty, and this first chapter brings that into view.

"Before I formed thee... I knew thee, and before thou camest forth I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." Here was Jeremiah's place in God's foreknowledge. It was only at this much later time that Jeremiah was made aware that sovereignty had governed his very birth and his life right up to this time. He would have regarded himself as merely one in the millions of people born into this world, with nothing special about his birth, or of special Divine intention in his life up to this time. He has come to manhood, with so far nothing very conspicuous of God's hand in his history. But here at length God breaks in and says, 'Jeremiah, before you ever had a physical being you were in my knowledge; before you came into this world, I had already set you apart; I had designed you as a prophet for the nations'. And that would certainly carry with it this, that however Jeremiah was constituted naturally, and whatever had been his experience in the years of his life up to that time, there was something behind it not recognised by him which was all related to the purpose which God had foreseen, foreknown and fore-intended as to Jeremiah.

My point is that Jeremiah did not know anything about that until the day that God came to him and gave him his commission. And then, from that time, he began to realise (and perhaps, then, only in an imperfect way) that there was something more bound up with his being in this world and with the way in which he had been brought up than ever he had imagined - that there was a Divine sovereignty there which was being exercised according to Divine foreknowledge. I have said that that Divine sovereignty had something to do with his very constituting, and yet it is just there that we may find some difficulty. Jeremiah himself did. 'I cannot speak! Thou callest me to be a prophet, and a prophet must be able above all things to speak, but I cannot. Lord, Thou hast made a mistake, Thou hast picked the wrong one; I am not constituted for this thing to which Thou hast called me; Thou dost need a different kind of person'. The Lord most definitely repudiated Jeremiah's suggestion that He had not had a hand in his constituting.

How is it explained? There is only one way of explaining it. There is one all-governing consideration with God, and that consideration governs all His activities. If there is any truth at all that Jeremiah after all was born as God intended him to be born, and made as God intended him to be made, and was the kind of person that God wanted for this work, there is only one explanation, and it is everywhere in the Bible. It was and is that all should be of God and not of man, that there should never be any room or ground whatever for glory to go to the servant, the instrument, the vessel. All the glory is to come to God. God is governed by that always. He, then, will deliberately choose the weak things, the foolish, the things which are not. That is Divine sovereignty - "that no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Cor. 1:29). That is the most hopeful ground for us all. If that is true, then there is hope for us, there are possibilities for the Lord where we are concerned; and if we have not come there, we may as well understand from this moment that we shall never bring very much glory to God until we have become thoroughly broken vessels.

So much has been made of the natural gifts and qualifications of certain servants of the Lord - of Paul in particular; but the Lord's handling of Paul was such as to make him very hesitant to say anything about himself. He was broken; yes, he was shattered. Paul would say more than anyone that, if anything was done, it was the Lord Who did it, not Paul. Whatever of gift there may be in the background, remember that it is the Lord who will account for anything at all of good that is done.

So we find that Jeremiah in his very self, in his very origin, and in the whole course of his life, was compelled to rest for himself upon the God of resurrection. That is what it meant. If there is to be anything at all in this service, it has to be like something that is brought out from the dead. 'I cannot!' 'Cannot' is the word that lies always over a grave, over death. Ask anybody who is dead to do something! What is the word that lies over resurrection? 'Can!' But God is the God of resurrection. Jeremiah was constituted on that basis. His very being was because of the God of resurrection; his very ministry also. Follow him through his story; again and again it was as though the end had come; but no, it had not. By Divine, sovereign intervention he went on and on. When royalty and leaders had been carried away from Judah, when thousands of inhabitants were away there in captivity, Jeremiah is still carrying on his work with the poor of the flock in the land.

Then we read Ezra 1:1 - "That the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia". Years afterward, Jeremiah still lived, though he was dead; he was still influential, though he had passed from the earth. It is the God of resurrection in action. That is the sovereignty of God.

And what was the fruit of Jeremiah's ministry? Well, Daniel says, "I... understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah..." (Daniel 9:2). Daniel had been reading Isaiah and Jeremiah, and because of this he started to pray. The great ministry of Daniel was produced by the understanding which he got from Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the result was the remnant returning - the sovereign action of God in relation to Jeremiah's ministry.

"I have made thee a prophet unto the nations"; not only to the nation but to the nations. Now here is Babylon, and Cyrus, king of Persia; Babylon, Persia, all coming under the sovereign power of God through the word of Jeremiah. Tremendous, from a child!

I have said that Jeremiah may stand in a special historic relation to the great purposes of God, but the principles hold good. We may not be Jeremiahs, Isaiahs, or Pauls, but we are called to serve the Lord's interests, and there may be very much more sovereignty behind our lives than we are aware of. It may be only as we go on that we shall become conscious that the Lord evidently brought us into being for something - that there is something stirring in us that gravitates in a certain direction which is prophetic of how we are to serve the Lord. We find things taking shape in a certain way, with a corresponding deep exercise of our hearts about that. We come up against our own lack of qualification, our own unsuitability, and we are thrown right back upon the God of resurrection. We find that the very fact of our being thrown upon the Lord

for everything is a sovereign act, with a view to safeguarding everything for the Lord. It is the safest thing, and perhaps one of the greatest evidences that things are of the Lord, when we feel, on the one hand, that we must, out of an inward compulsion, serve the Lord, and yet, on the other hand, that if there is to be anything at all for the Lord it must all be of His doing. You may take it that if there is anything about us of confidence in ourselves that we can do it, that we are sufficient, God in His sovereignty stands off and leaves us alone till we come to our senses. It is a safe place, to know that everything must be of the Lord. It is a part of His own sovereign work of grace in us. But it is a very comforting thing to know that when the Lord has purposes He wants to fulfil, He sovereignly acts, even in secret, in relation to these purposes, so that even a birth which looks simply like one of the millions of births is a singled-out thing in the sovereignty of God, with an object; that the upbringing, the training, which has nothing so very distinctive about it as making important the person concerned, is nevertheless all a part of design; and perhaps in later years we shall see that there was more design than we imagined in what looked like a life without very much design. Faith must turn to God in that way and believe that He knows from the beginning all about us, that He knows what He wants where we are concerned; and if we are really crucified men and women, the purposes of God will take their course. But let us note well that there is the vital turning point. Whatever we may have sensed before, until that day comes when the self-element gets right out of the way, until all the sense that we can do it and want to do it is thoroughly smitten and we are in the place where we really know that if there is going to be anything at all it must be of the Lord, nothing can really arise. But when that day comes, then all that purpose which has been waiting stored up will begin to break out and take charge of our lives in a new way, we shall know that we are girded by God for something - not perhaps what we would have chosen. It may perhaps be for the most difficult thing ever given to anyone to do. Jeremiah would have escaped it a thousand times if he could have done so, but he could not; and in this very holding on his way we see but one more expression of the fact that once the Lord has set His hand to do a work, He will sovereignly carry the vessel of that service to full accomplishment so long as the vessel remains suitably yielded in His hand.

Chapter 10 - The Servant's Continual Need of Grace

Reading: Luke 9:28-36; Matt. 17:1-9; Mark 14:66-72; 2 Pet. 1:18.

One would not put these Scriptures together in this way - for it would seem rather unfair to Peter - but for the fact that this account given in "Mark" of Peter's denial was virtually Peter's own record of what took place. The great influence in Mark's life eventually was Peter, and it is quite generally accepted that the Gospel by Mark, as it is called, is really Peter's record of things, and bears all the marks of his nature and character. It is therefore impressive that Peter recorded so definitely and clearly the account of what took place, and drew attention so plainly to the vehemence of his denial of the Lord. That is some justification for placing the denial alongside of the great event of the transfiguration.

We have seen on an earlier occasion how heaven and hell, God and Satan, were contending for the ground in the soul of this man, and that everything for Peter's future usefulness to the Lord depended upon the Lord's having the ground by Peter's own yielding of it to Him.

Now here we might speak of the height and the depth possible in the soul of one person. Here is the mountain - probably Hermon, over nine thousand feet high - a symbol of the great spiritual height represented by the transfiguration. We are not speaking about the transfiguration at the moment, but it does represent a very great height of spiritual vision and experience. One would think that it would be impossible to rise to anything higher than to see the glorified Son of man. How high a spiritual thing that was for these men! And then, right at the other extreme, it is difficult to think of anything much deeper and lower than Peter's vehement and repeated denial of his Lord. How high! How low! How wide is the range of possibility in the life of any child of God! I expect we know just a little of this. There are times when we feel we are on the very mountain top with the Lord, and we wonder if ever again we shall be found guilty of the doubts and fears that have characterised us before. We feel that now we shall go on, and there will be no more ups and downs; and it is not always very long before we seem to be just at the other extreme, and wonder if ever we shall be up again. This is not an uncommon experience. We may be amazed at Peter and say, 'If ever I had such an experience and saw the Lord transfigured, I should never get anywhere near denying Him after that.' But I think we know enough to know that such things are not impossible. There are great heights and great depths which remain possible to the soul of any man or woman. And that is the point, I think, of the whole thing.

You see, the Lord was making it perfectly clear to Peter and to others during their time with Him that they, in themselves, were not to be relied upon, and He was saying through them to us that the stability is not in us, in what we are at all. We can never come to a place where we are settled and sure that there will be no more variations; we are not of that stuff, especially when we come into the spiritual realm where we have to meet the extra factors which Peter was undoubtedly meeting in the desire of Satan to have him to sift him as wheat. So stability is not in us, and the Lord takes

great pains and goes a very long way to settle us as to that matter, to undercut all the ground of self-strength and self-sufficiency. It is something that has got to be established and maintained all the way along in order that one thing may be made manifest - one thing which came out in Peter's life and is perhaps the great thing which characterised him. That one thing is the grace of God.

The Lord knew whom He had chosen (John 13:18). "He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). And yet, knowing exactly these heights and these depths, these terrible reactions and rebounds, knowing how far Peter could and would go - and we too in the same way - He chose him. Surely it is sovereign grace! When you come to read Peter's letters, you find that the key to his letters is grace. It is a simple, but tremendously helpful, message to our hearts. On the one hand, the Lord leaves us in no doubt whatever as to what kind of stuff we are made of, and it would be very easy for us to despair of ourselves when we find the tremendous extremes of elation, and then of depression, which are possible in us; but the grace of God is greater than all that, and it is through making us aware of that utter worthlessness which belongs to us that He displays His grace most gloriously.

Peter, as an example, is taken on the way which lays down a very sure foundation for the grace of God. We can understand Peter speaking much about grace. But then, you see, there was the ministry aspect of it. "Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke 22:31,32). The real ministry of Peter was going to be strengthening, confirming, encouraging his brethren, and undoubtedly that ministry was along these lines. Many of his brethren would come to the place where they were prepared to give up and disappear from the work because of the consciousness of their own insufficiency and weakness. There would be a great need for a confirming, establishing, and strengthening ministry, for this very reason, that the Lord was never going to allow His blessings, however great, to obscure the fact that all was of grace, and that on the human side all was weakness and worthlessness. In that realm we well know how much a ministry is called for to strengthen and confirm the Lord's people. And so the ground for that had to be laid very truly and deeply in Peter's own life. If we are allowed or caused to see, perhaps in some deeper and fuller way, our own worthlessness, it is that we may discover more fully the grace of God in order that we may be able to help others who are on the point of despairing and giving up. There is a ministry factor in it, and we find that, in the case of Peter and Paul and others, the Lord was making the ground safe for service.

It is very impressive to notice that, however great were the blessings of the Lord, however much the power of God came to rest upon these men - and I need not remind you how greatly Peter and Paul were blessed and used by God - yet all that was never for one moment allowed to cover over the fact of the utter helplessness and worthlessness of the men in themselves. It seems as though the Lord kept that balance all the way along. There is a very great peril in being used and blessed - the peril that we should forget that this is the Lord and not ourselves at all: that we do not figure in

it. If the Lord for one moment lifted His hand from us we should go utterly to pieces and could commit the most awful sin and make shipwreck of our lives - as the outflow of what is in us. That could be, and the Lord would take great pains to see that that does not happen as the result of His own blessing. He will not bless to our undoing. So, if He blesses, if He uses, He will always balance it in some way with that which will keep us aware that this is not coming from us but from the Lord. He makes usefulness safe by always keeping us conscious of the underlying fact of what we actually and truly are in ourselves.

I think these are some further characteristics of the life of one who may be led into a knowledge of the Lord and into usefulness to Him. Service has its principles, and Peter undoubtedly represents the man of service to the Lord. But what a background there is for that service! And it will never be otherwise with any of us. Even though we may never rise to the measure of Peter's value, nevertheless we are going, either here or hereafter, to be of very great service to the Lord - that is what He is after, but our theme will ever have to be, Grace, wonderful grace, unspeakable grace.

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