

DIVINE DELIGHT

"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).

We are not saved by works, but we are saved to work, and true preaching must exalt both doctrine and duty. Doctrine always comes first, and then duty grows out of doctrine. Any doctrine is dead that does not have any works, for faith without works is dead.

The Lord has not saved us to put us on a shelf as trophies of His grace and power to save, but He has saved us to make us His partners in what He does and in what He wants us to do.

Every true believer has something to do for Him Who has saved him. Every real Christian has a duty -- a duty of doctrine and a duty that promises reward.

What the believer's life ought to be is a matter of importance. What the believer ought to do and how much he ought to do are matters that no Christian can treat lightly.

The Christian is a steward accountable for his time and talents, for his ability and his abundance.

How far should the Christian go for God? Our text indicates that he should go far enough to delight God.

I. The Center of Service.

Our scripture lesson reveals the center of service: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered with the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

Christian service centers in Christ. The basis of all that the believer does is what Christ had done for him. Not until a man is saved can he be expected or counted on for service. This is why many, who attempt to render service, fail. They start out for worldly reasons instead of reasons growing out of faith in Christ.

But there are many who have been regenerated who actually do not do what they should for Christ. They seemingly have not realized that salvation is more than an experience, and that it calls for the exercise of that experience.

The closer we get to Christ and the more of His Spirit we have the more faithful we will be in service.

II. The Channel of Service.

According to the context, there is also a channel of service: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Hebrews 13:16).

Christ is both the center of Christian service and the channel of Christian service. If the Christian is to receive any reward for his service, it must be rendered in the name of Christ and for His sake.

The world may publicize the works of human charity, whether done by those who know Christ or those who do not know Him, but those which are done by the unsaved will not be rewarded from heaven. What the Christian does as a steward of Christ, if it is to be rewarded, must be done in the name of Christ and through His church.

It is through Christ only that we come to God, and it is through Christ only that we can serve God acceptably.

III. The Content of Service.

The content of service is revealed clearly in verse fifteen: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

The professing Christian who never gives thanks to God and never testifies for God and never praises God is a strange phenomenon. The believer who is dumb about God's grace and keeps his lips sealed gives very poor testimony to God and very poor evidence of his personal faith.

He is a poor husband who is never prompted to tell his wife how much she means to him, but he is even a poorer Christian who fails to have and to express gratitude to God for what He has done for him.

Christians are not to keep quiet about what Christ has done for them. Both privately and publicly they are to thank Him, and to tell the world what Christ has done for them.

All who can call themselves Christians talk about things and about people. Then, why are they not willing to talk about Christ and His goodness? We praise men and things. Then, why not praise God and His grace? We give thanks to people for their favors. Why not give thanks to God for His goodness to us?

IV. The Complement of Service.

The text adds its significant word which is to be the complement of service: "But to do good and to communicate forget not."

To speak with our lips is important, but that is not enough. We complete the service with our lives. It is good to talk, but it is better to follow the talk with the proper action. It is good to praise God with words, but it is better to praise Him with works also.

The complement or the completion of service is twofold in nature. It is expressed in the following manner:

1. "Do good."

We are admonished not to forget "to do good." This is a high duty for man. Christ "went about doing good." It is doubtful if there has ever been a time when more people were trying to do good than today. Money is raised or contributed to meet every sort of a need. It is the duty of every Christian to do good, and it must not be taken lightly.

Much talk is so empty. Many glibly express sympathy with words, but are so slow to express it in any other manner. How empty is such sympathy!

We talk about being Christians, but our deeds do not always show that we are. We sing about loving God, but do we show it by our good deeds?

Some who claim to be Christians never go to the house of God and worship Him, and never do the things that advance Christ's cause, and never support the church of which they are members. Some church members want the preacher to come to see them, if anything goes wrong with their family, but they are not good enough Christians, and do not love the Lord enough to go to church to hear the preacher preach the Word of God or to show people that they care anything about God's Word or His church.

It is a sin to work for ourselves and our loved ones and not to work for God our heavenly Father.

What is the price of doing good?

(1) Study.

As Wordsworth said, those who would do good must have ideas of man, nature and of human life. The starving beggar, the sick child, and the desolate woman want much more than the relief for which they ask. Each one cries out for human fellowship; each one has a capacity for God; each one is less than his best self because of someone's neglect, because of a bad home, or because of the cruelty of others.

The price of doing good is study. By study we mean thinking -- daring and persistent thinking. Above all things people hate to think. It is so much easier for them to feel or to give.

(2) Surrender.

Self in its many forms spoils doing good. The price of doing good is self-surrender, and that is hard for proud human nature to pay. We will give up everything rather than our pride, vanity and self-will, but God demands of us an humble spirit. Surrender does not mean anything unless it includes the surrender of the will. The Lord wants us to surrender all that we are and all that we have to Him.

2. "Communicate."

Our text admonishes not to forget "to communicate." What does this mean? Here, as in Romans 15:26 and elsewhere, "communicate" signifies the giving of alms but always with an emphasis upon the principle of Christian fellowship which underlies the gift. In other words, "communicate" signifies a material expression in giving of the Christian fellowship felt in the heart.

God admonishes those who have been blessed so richly not to forget the needs of others. Concerning earthly things we have been told that "He hath given us all things richly to enjoy." But all about us are those who do not know anything about the grace of God which is revealed in Christ, so far as their personal experiences are concerned. Anyone who knows and truly enjoys Christ cannot refrain from telling those who are strangers to His grace about Him and His saving power. If there is in us any deep, abiding and life-shaping thankfulness for the gift of Christ our Saviour, it is a certainty that our tongues will not cleave to the roofs of our mouths, and we shall not remain silent about Him. Loving hearts must and will speak.

Another side of this conception, which is set forth in our text, is that of beneficence among men, in the general form of doing good, and in the specific form of giving money. It has a message for us professing Christians. It is in vain to pray unless you work. It is a sin to work for yourself unless you acknowledge the bond of sympathy with all mankind, and delight "to do good and to communicate."

We are not to give as a duty only, but as a privilege also. We are not to give only enough to get by, but to satisfy the soul's desire in outward expression. The Bible says that he is foolish "that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). When out of grateful hearts touched by God's grace we give our material gifts we are "rich toward God."

We may never be rich in this world's goods, and may never have much to give to God, but the smallest Christian contributor is richer than the wealthiest who do not give. No amount of giving can ever bring spiritual wealth to a man, but consistent Christian communication can minister to a man's spiritual growth and to his enjoyment of God. When we give to God, Who is the Giver, we share in the exercise which He declares is more blessed than receiving, and we enter into a real partnership with Him. One reason that we don't enjoy God more is that we do not give more to Him.

V. The Cost of Service.

The cost of service is stated in our text: "For with such sacrifices." It is significant that "to do good and to communicate" are called "sacrifices."

That explains why Christians do not do more good and more communicating. That is why they take it out in talking rather than in doing and in giving. It costs to testify and to give as Christians. It calls for sacrifice to do what the Lord wants us to do for Him in doing good and in communicating.

VI. The Compensation of Service.

Our text points to the compensation of service: "For with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

The wealth of the world belongs to God, but He works through human partners. He pays for the work of advancing His kingdom with the money His people contribute. When they sacrifice to work and to give, God sees and gets pleasure in the preaching for which they pay, in the church building for which they give, and in the propagation of the gospel for which they contribute. He sees and gets pleasure out of the souls that are saved because His people sacrifice, and out of the sinners who are forgiven through the Word which is proclaimed because of the sacrifices of the people.

The thought of divine delight is expressed in the words: "God is well pleased." This verse throws a lot of light on Christian witnessing and giving. It is fair in declaring that such service calls for sacrifice. But it is fair also in declaring that such sacrifices give God great delight.

What we do in obedience to God may not get praise from the world, but it will give pleasure to God. Did you ever see a mother tuck away as a treasure a simple something

that her child gave her at childish cost? She cherishes it because it expressed love. So it is with God when His children give what costs and give it because they love Him. Because it means love, it causes divine delight.

May God help us to be better as His children in Christ Jesus in our doing good and in communicating.