

HONOR FOR SERVICE

"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John 12:26.

This is an age of honor seeking. We urge our children to strive for the honors in school; we rejoice with them when they obtain these honors. We are glad when we or our countrymen are honored; and from our hearts we say, God speed the day when all our men may be worthy of honor, whether or not they are awarded great responsibilities. It is in no wise wrong to seek honor, if only it be sought in an honorable way in "well-doing." In Romans 2:7 Paul urges us to "seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." Avowing then, the wisdom of a Christian's seeking honor, we ask: How shall he obtain it? Our text gives us a simple and concise answer, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

I. What Christ Requires of His Followers.

Following Christ involves conformity to His character, obedience to His commands, and endurance of the trials incident to His service. Men view life in different ways, e. g., as the gratification of animal appetites, the desire for social pleasures, the love of distinction, and the service of Christ. It is correct and helpful for one to regard the real life as consisting of a personal attendance upon the Lord Jesus, and a reverent and affectionate obedience to Him. It is the highest ambition one can cherish to be an obedient and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one question which confronts us at every turning point in life, and that is, "Will it pay?" If any proposition is made to us relating to domestic, social, or business life, the first question that thrusts itself upon us is, "Will it pay?" In this intensely practical age, when men are seeking the business side of almost every pursuit in life, it is natural for us to consider, for ourselves and for those we love, "Will it pay?" In the matter mentioned in our text we may settle it, just as we do in other matters, by estimating the outlay and the income. If a man invests ten thousand dollars and receives twenty thousand dollars, he knows he has made a good investment. It has paid and the man is pleased. But if he receives only eight or seven or six thousand dollars, he knows he has made a bad investment. It has not paid, and the man is disappointed. So, in the Christian life, we may well ask, "Does the honor promised compensate for the service rendered?"

1. What are the characteristics of the services of Christ?

- (1) It is not equivalent to bondage.
- (2) It is not a condition of menialism.
Although it is somewhat mysterious, the relation between the Saviour and His servants is most intimate and tender.
- (3) It involves a complete renunciation of every other service.
- (4) It includes complete dedication to Christ.
Head, heart, hand, time, talent, influence, and possessions must all be laid on His altar.
- (5) It is sincere and heartfelt.
We may deceive others, and even ourselves, but we cannot deceive God, whose eye peers down into the deepest recesses of our souls.
- (6) It must be rendered to Christ.
"If any man serve ME." Many men serve themselves, or their churches, or their denominations, and serve them alone; whereas, the church, the denomination, and every other enterprise, should be served only so far as we can glorify

God and serve Christ thereby. It is quite probable that many who claim and even seem to serve Christ are never honored here or hereafter, because they are only serving self. The motive which actuates us must be a desire to glorify God. Selfishness, therefore, must be eliminated from our hearts, and self-interest from our plans and calculations in order that we may render acceptable service to Christ.

(7) It must be exact.

This service must be according to the Word of God as far as we can understand its teachings. We are not to be our own judges of what we are to do, but must from the depths of our hearts say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Willing, faithful, obedient service is the only scriptural evidence of our salvation, of our oneness with Christ, and of the acceptableness of our service to Him. This kind of service is the most difficult undertaking of man, but it is possible and profitable.

Why is it so difficult?

- a. Because it requires absolute submission to God's will.
 - b. Because it requires us to acknowledge our nothingness.
 - c. Because it requires us to strive to root out all pride from our hearts.
- After we have fully surrendered ourselves to Christ and become Christians, on the heart's unseen battlefield the fierce war continues throughout life's journey. All intelligent and informed Christians readily admit that all our time and energies must be devoted to Him who died for us, and that whatsoever we do, whether in word or deed, we must do all to the glory of God. Serving Christ is the best investment ever made by mortal man.

2. How may we serve Christ?

(1) In the faith we hold.

We serve Him by studying our faith, mastering it, loving it, and practicing it.

(2) In suffering for His sake.

(3) In the acts we perform.

If you cannot serve Christ in one way and in one place you can in another-- the servant in the household, the nurse in the hospital, the farmer between the plough handles, the merchant behind the counter, the teacher in the classroom, and the professional man in his office.

II. What Christ Promises to His Servants.

"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." It is observable that Jesus addresses to His followers no promise of worldly or carnal advantage, such as Mohammed, for example, made use of to allure and inspire his adherents. Jesus invited men to become His followers even when He saw the cross before His eyes. There was sublimity in such an invitation given in such an hour. And as the service to which He invited men was not without its perils, so the recompense He offered was unworldly and spiritual.

III. What Christ Offers To Give Those Who Will Accept Him.

1. Eternal life.

It is impossible to explain all that is comprehended in the expression "eternal life."

The immense travel from North to South in the autumn and from South to North in the spring is not confined to the wealthy, but it is often made up of poor people

in search of health, striving by every possible means to prolong their lives. If you should visit our charity hospitals you would see poor, unfortunate, deformed, helpless, physical wrecks, many of them without homes, money, friends, relatives, or loved ones. You might say, "These would be glad to die." But you are mistaken. Even here you fail to find a willingness to give up life unless calmed by the Spirit of God or made reckless by a spirit of desperation. You turn away from such scenes and whisper to yourself, "Yes, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Yes, the natural man holds on to the thread of life with wonderful tenacity, and will suffer on and on, year after year, rather than part with that mysterious thing we call life. Now, if this life of weakness and doubt, of fear and trembling, be so desirable and valuable, what will that life be where weakness is turned into strength, and doubts shall fly away? If this life, where pain, sorrow, and bereavement are constantly sweeping over us, is worth such sacrifices as are made to hold it, what will that life be where there shall be no more pain, nor loss of loved ones, nor death? If this life so charms us, where the night of trouble and disappointment comes with its long, lonely hours, and the night of death constantly confronts us, what will that life be where the gates stand open by day? For there is no night there--no night of sin, no night of disappointment, no night of sorrow, and no night of death. All, yes, all is one eternal day. The souls of the redeemed shall live on while God lives and eternity lasts.

If it be an honor to pass out of the grade school into high school or out of high school into the university, who shall undertake to measure the honors to be accorded to him who may dwell for ever with God?

2. Adoption into God's family.

We hear much about families and their relative standing. It is regarded as a great honor to be connected with an honorable and prominent family. What are regarded as the elements of an honorable family?

(1) Ancient historic recognition.

Many can speak with commendable pride of their forefathers who marched under the command of our American chieftain during the Revolutionary War. Many can go back and trace their line of descent through the Huguenots and Puritans to others beyond the sea. But when we turn to the third chapter of Luke and read of Jesus and follow His line of descent we go back beyond David to Noah, Enoch, Seth, and Adam, who was the son of God. So by faith in Christ Jesus we are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." By the operation of the Holy Spirit we become partakers of the Divine nature. The Holy Spirit applies to our souls the efficacy of the blood of Christ, so that we become blood-kin to God through His Son Jesus, who claims us as His brethren. So then we are the children of God, and are members of that family which antedates all other families.

(2) Wisdom.

The Word of God says, "The world by wisdom knew not God." But our Father is infinite in wisdom, good in greatness, and great in goodness. People should heed the admonition of God's Word, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."

(3) Wealth.

Wealth is regarded as a mark of family pride. The Lord blessed Abraham with herds and cattle and gold and silver. Job was the greatest man in the East. Solomon's riches and influence were a wonder. In our day we have various millionaires and multi-millionaires. However, if they should all pool their interests and call it one fortune, it would be only as a drop in the ocean compared with the wealth of our heavenly Father. All the merchandise, banks, railroads, factories, stocks and bonds are as nothing to Him. He can dispose

of crowns and scepters as easily as a child breaks a toy. He can set up and as easily tear down. Our Father is the owner of all the silver and gold of the world, and the cattle on a thousand hills are His, also. We have not yet come into possession of our patrimony, but

We can read our titles clear
To mansions in the skies.

Many years ago in New Orleans an influential, intelligent, wealthy man picked up a little newsboy and adopted him as his child. The elegant family mansion, with all its costly furniture, its superb paintings by the old masters, its musical instruments, and the honored family name, with all the man owned, became the property, through legal heirship, of the little boy, who, until that adoption, was a barefoot waif. He was sent to the best schools and colleges. Found without parents, without home, without reputation, nameless, all became his. Was he honored? How incalculably greater the honor bestowed upon spiritual orphans who have been adopted into God's most glorious family, where angels are the servants, the Son of God the Elder Brother, and God Himself their own Father.

3. Fellowship with Christ.

His friendship and fellowship atone for worldly neglect and contempt. When He is with us our labors are crowned with success. Those who know and appreciate Christ consider it to be the greatest happiness to be with Him, to hear His encouraging voice, to share His conflict, and to participate in the glory of His victory.

4. A home.

The question of past ages has been, "If a man die, shall he live again?" And not only shall he live but where? These great questions are answered, for Christ brought life and immortality to light, and He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." For us, then, He has prepared a home, where the family shall all be gathered when time shall end and our labors are finished. If we never own a home here, by the grace of God we may own one in heaven.

The sacred memories, the loving hearts, the familiar faces, and the musical voices of a real home can never be forgotten, nor reproduced when gone. The heart feels lighter, the sun shines brighter, the birds sing sweeter, the stars seem nearer, the days fly faster, and heaven seems dearer to us when we are in the midst of those influences which produce what we call home. But here "the eagle stirreth up her nest," and the sweetest homes are broken up. Sons and daughters marry and scatter. For a long time there were feast-days, bright Christmas times, father's and mother's birthdays, Thanksgiving days when we all went home to a "family reunion." Father and Mother would meet us and call us boys and girls, and with neighbors and friends we would spend a few happy days together. The old hearth-stone was there, the bright fire, the old arm-chairs occupied by Father and Mother; the old clock was on the mantel, saying, "Ever forever; forever, never." But it did stop, and the old home is broken up. Perhaps the house is standing yet, but it is occupied by strangers; or, even though some member of the family may still own the premises, these family reunions are now no longer possible to most of us, for some of the dwellers there have passed.

"Beyond the parting and the meeting,
Beyond the farewell and the greeting."

But by and by God shall honor us with a great family reunion which will never break up.

We have had some great expositions and world's fairs. The works of art, the inventions and discoveries of men, and the productions of nature have been brought together, and the children of the nations of the earth have met and clasped hands. All have come together in a reunion of the families of the earth. But how short has been their stay, and how unsatisfactory has been their meeting with each other! But, there is to be a great national and international family reunion, for "They shall come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Jesus Christ Himself will welcome us; from the King's Son will we hear the "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."

"When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun."

Keep silent, keep silent, and hear the rustling of the great throng as they go sweeping through the gates! Look and see the saints go marching in, angels harping the "Harvest Home," and Jesus receiving them with outstretched arms! Love, rest, and home! God grant that all of us may render acceptable service to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.