

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST IN ENLISTMENT

"She hath done what she could." Mark 14:8.

While He was here on the earth our Lord Jesus Christ established His church. As I understand it, it is His desire that His church shall have three objectives.

1. Evangelism.

"Make disciples of all the nations." The aim and objective of a New Testament Church is to win souls to Christ. Various motives prompt us to work at this task:--example of Christ, command of Christ, condition of people--lost in sin, welfare of church, and desire for reward. Methods employed are gospel sermons, family influence, saved friends, personal work, and Christian literature.

2. Education.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." By education is meant to make known the gospel message, teach people their need of Christ, show them the way to Christ, persist until they are brought to Him, and then teach them all things commanded by Him. When any church neglects or ignores educational methods the cause of Christ always suffers. The church which puts the proper emphasis on teaching always prospers. Various motives prompt us to work at this task also:--love for Christ, for others, for the church, and the desire for personal blessings. Methods employed are gospel sermons and addresses, Sunday School, Training Union, Study Courses, Vacation Bible Schools, and good literature.

3. Enlistment.

We must strive to enlist our church members in real loyalty to Christ and to the church. Church is a necessary institution, best teacher of righteousness we have, friend of childhood, inspirer of youth, strengthener of middle life, and comforter of old age. We go to church for public worship, for Christian fellowship, Biblical instruction, spiritual inspiration, and Christian service. We prove our loyalty to Christ by our attitude toward and support of His church.

I think each of us should strive to serve the Lord in such a way that He will be able to say of us what He said about Mary, namely, "She hath done what she could." Mark 14:8. That statement referred to her anointment of Jesus. Why did Mary anoint Jesus as and when she did? She was not seeking a place in the limelight; to win the applause of the crowd; to achieve fame; or to have herself remembered. Why then did she do it?

I. She Wanted To Express Her Grateful Love To Her Blessed Lord.

The Master had done so much for Mary. He had permitted her to sit at His feet and listen to His words of grace and truth. He had honored her and her family by His presence in their home. He had sympathized with her in her great sorrow. She anointed Him to express her love for Him. She gave her best to Him and did her best for Him.

II. She Wanted To Honor Her Wonderful Master.

She did not trust others to anoint the Master for her, but she anointed Him with her own hands.

The New Testament does not permit proxy religion. Each soul must do business with the Lord directly or not at all. Truth of competence of individual soul is clearly taught in the Word of God. This doctrine has far-reaching implications. A pastor may pray for his people but not instead of them. His Bible study cannot take the place of theirs. His witness for Christ cannot be substituted for the witness of his people. His service to the needy will not relieve his people of their obligation to serve them. Good works performed in the name of the church by means of money given collectively cannot take the place of good deeds done by individuals who make up the church. One cannot depend upon another to be his proxy either in the matter of salvation or of service.

Not only believe in the right of every soul to direct access to God, but also in equality of privilege. We must remember that every privilege carries with it a corresponding duty. The right of every member to a voice in the affairs of a church implies the duty to participate in these affairs. Equality of privilege must be balanced by equality of responsibility, according to ability. One is not to furnish faith only while another furnishes the money. We are not placing enough emphasis on participation. Someone has said when a new member presents himself for membership he is invited to sit down and that is all he is ever asked to do. Consequently, he conceives his duty as a church member to be that of sitting down, listening, and contributing a little when the collection plate is passed. The limited service of listening does not satisfy the demands of Christ or the longings of the Christian heart. "Use me or lose me" is the unspoken challenge of the majority of church members. We lose many because we do not use them. Some cannot be used in places of leadership because a few hold too many positions. Helpful when a church has apportionment of one position only for each person. Believe in a place for every member, and every member in his place. Find places of service for those with appropriate talents. Can't do it by calling for volunteers. That is a waste of time and breath and gets wrong person in the right place. People like to do what they can do well, and are embarrassed to undertake what is out of their line.

There are numerous things which must be done by each individual for himself. He is born as an individual. He breathes, eats, drinks, and sleeps for himself. He trusts Christ for salvation, confesses Him before men, and grows in His grace and knowledge for himself. He dies for himself, and is judged as an individual.

"Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." Therefore, one must take his own place in the church and do his own work for the Lord. No one else can occupy the place which belongs to him in the services of worship, in the support of the church and its program, and in the sharing of Christ and His gospel with others. Seeking to enlist every member in the work of the church and in the service of Christ is a tremendously big and important business.

The important thing for each of us is to do what we can for Christ. If we really love Him, we will not be content to serve Him by proxy--to hire someone else to show Christ how much you love Him. There is something which you can do for Him with your own hands, out of your own heart, and in your own way that no other can do. Find out what it is and do it with your might.

Each should give his or her very best to Christ. This is true for at least three reasons: --

1. Christ wants our best.

He asks us to trust Him, follow Him, obey Him, and work for Him. He wants us to discover His will, live according to that will, and do His will.

2. Christ deserves our best.

He made us, He has kept us, He has cared for us, He has redeemed us and saved us, therefore, He has every right to claim full possession of us. What Christ has done for us puts us under obligation to love Him, worship Him, serve Him, and work for Him. In so doing we shall discover that our lives will be filled with unspeakable joy, boundless possibilities, and unending victories.

Christ deserves the best of everything--the best hours of the day, the best years of our lives, the best words we can speak, the best songs we can sing, the best sermons we can preach, and the best deeds we can do for Him, because He gave His best, even His life for us.

3. Gratitude demands our best.

Christ has done so much for us, and has given us so much--world, age, Saviour, church, Word, and home in heaven. For the glorious privilege of doing our best for Christ, let us thank Him with the gratitude of our hearts, with the praises of our lips, and by the obedience of our lives. If we will give Him our very best, we will certainly receive His appreciation and win His commendation.

In the final estimate of life, the highest place is not given to brilliance, nor to success but to faithfulness. If we are faithful, at last we shall hear the welcome plaudit, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What a happy and encouraging thought that, though it may not be within our power to be brilliant, wealthy, or successful, it is within our power to be faithful and to give our best to Christ, and if we do so, we shall not miss the commendation of the Master at the end of the way.

"Only one life; 'Twill soon be past
Only what's done for Christ will last."

This wonderful Christ is adequate and available for our every need, whether the need be that of Saviour, an example, a teacher, or what not. His living presence is the real inspiration to holy living, to heroic endeavour, and to high achievement. He is exceedingly anxious for all believers to give Him His rightful place in their hearts and lives, which is the place of pre-eminence.

Go with me to a packed football stadium in Southern California. The University of Southern California is about to play its most important game of the season. It's a few years ago and on the team is an All-American by the name of Ed Smith. Only a few days before the mother of this star player passed away. She followed her son's football career with interest and affectionate delight. She was to have occupied a box at this game. Until game time it was not known by the crowd whether Ed would play or not. When the team trotted out onto the field, there he was.

Just a few moments before the opening whistle Ed walked over to the box where his mother would have sat. It was draped in black and on her seat there rested a large picture of her. The big player, helmet doffed, stood before it a moment and then, as he turned to leave, he said, "Mother, I am playing this game for you." With that, he was off to add another brilliant performance to his record.

Let that scene fade quickly away and another take its place. Not before a flag-draped photograph do we stand now, you and I; but before a blood-stained cross where hangs the Lord of glory and sinbearing Saviour. He is waiting to hear us say, "Lord, I am taking this game of life which somehow is more than a game, and -- I am playing it for you."

So gracious friend, as you go your way rejoicing in Christ Jesus, let Him smile through your face, speak with your tongue, walk with your feet, work with your hands, and love with your heart. Let Him seek sinners through you until the day break and shadows flee away. Sincerely say:

"Naught that I have mine own I call
I hold it for the Giver;
My heart, my life, my hope, my all,
Are His, are His forever."